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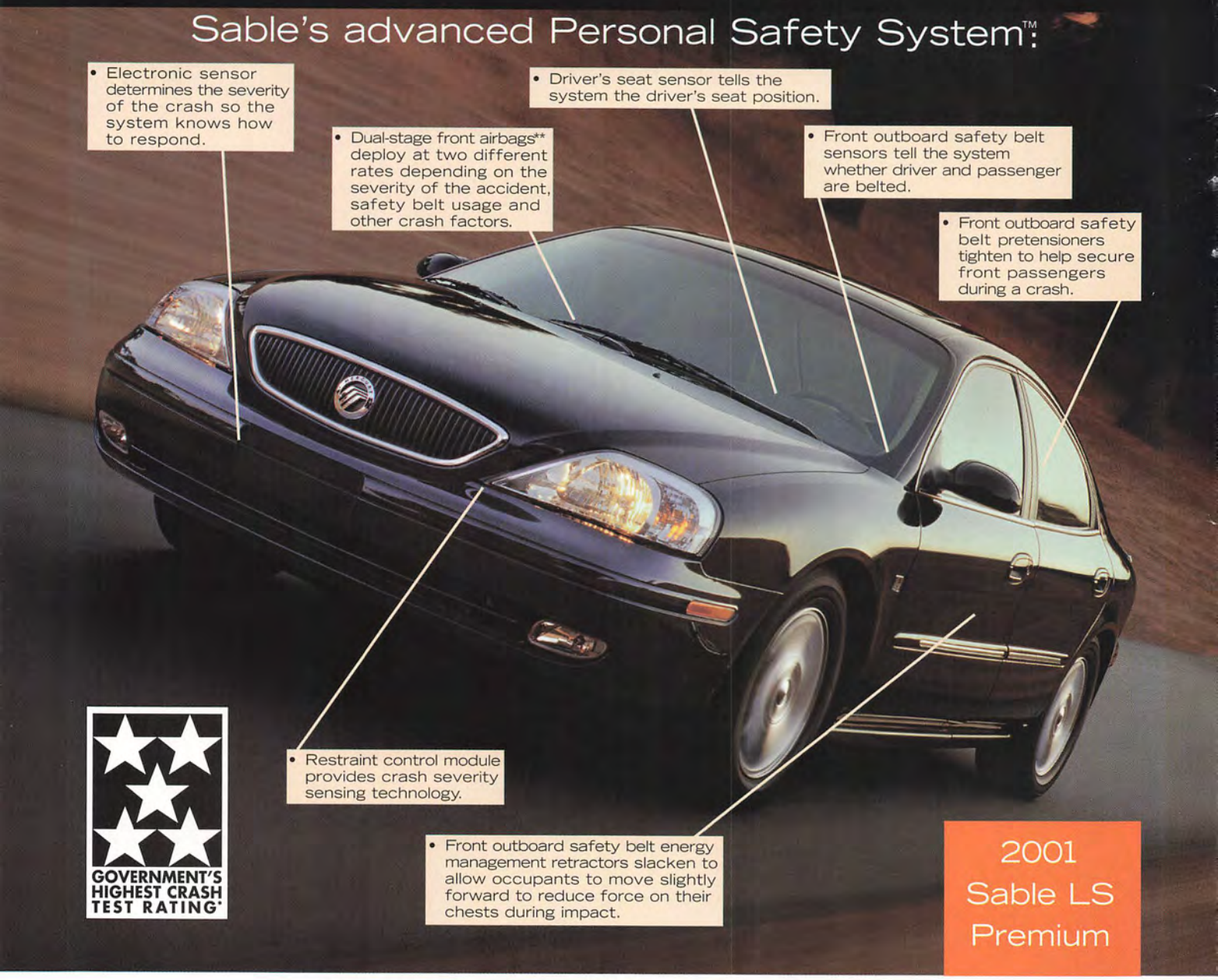
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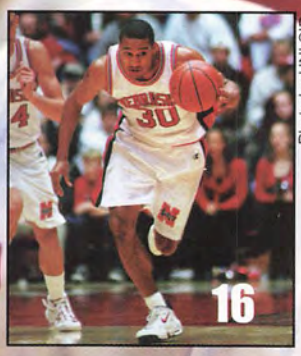

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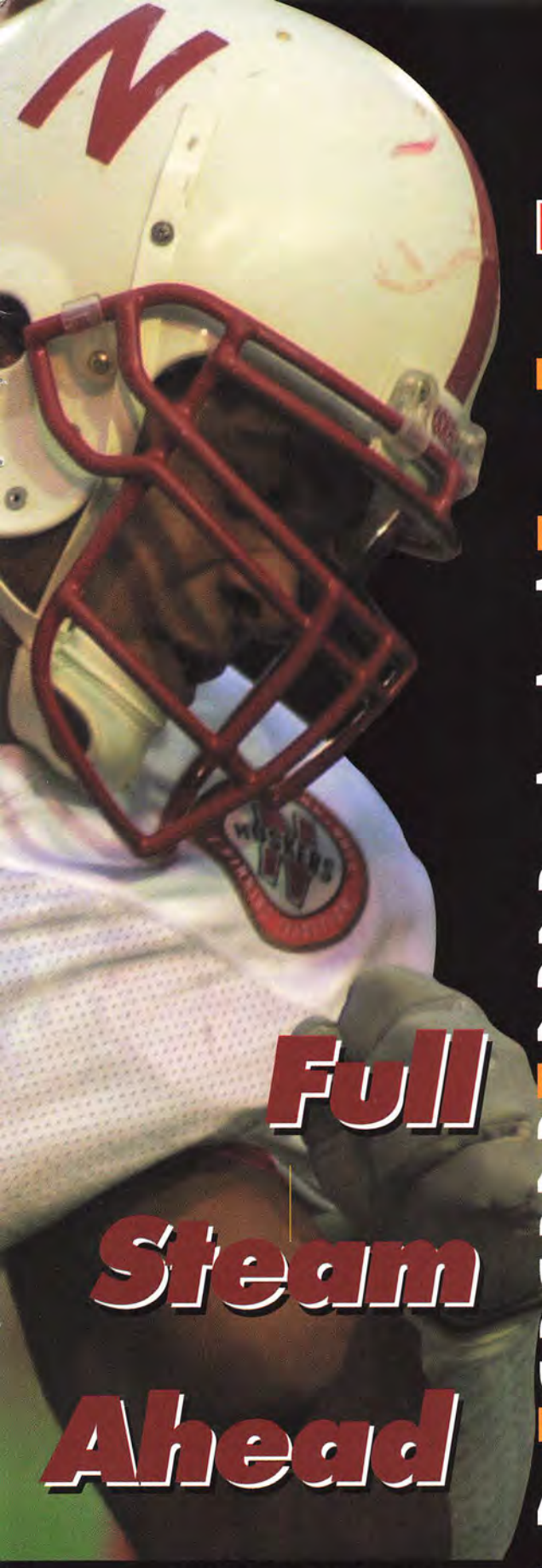

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Between the lines

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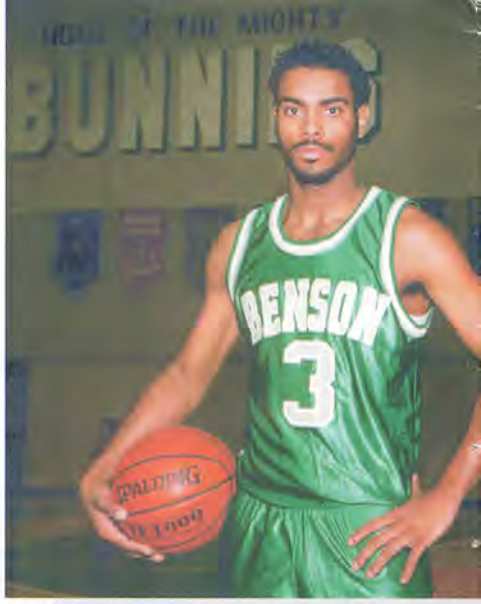

Beyond His Years

Arthur Boults has room to brag, but he doesn't.

He was a sixth-grader when he first dunked in a basketball game. As a freshman at Benson High School he not only suited up with the varsity, he also was in the starting lineup for the first basketball game of the season.

Most kids would be puffed up about that, but circumstances in Arthur's life give him a different perspective.

He was 5 years old when his father years died, so there are few memories and mostly regrets about a relationship that never had time to develop.

Arthur was the man of the house that included his mom and two sisters when the real heartache began four years ago. That's when his mom died after a two-year battle with cancer. She lived much of that time in the home and there were many journeys back and forth to the hospital.

One morning after one of those trips the night before, Arthur awoke to the news that his mother was gone. He was 14.

Now Arthur is 18 and serves as the father figure to his older sister's three children. They all live together in the same house along with Arthur's younger sister. Six people making ends meet, the oldest of whom is 24.

Benson Coach Terry Shelsta has much to say about the basketball talent of his star player, but when we spoke recently his first words of praise were about Arthur's maturity.

Shelsta marveled that, "Arthur is always under control," and he added, "in four years I have never seen him have a bad practice."

Basketball has been the one constant through Arthur's disrupted teen-age years. He tells me that when sorrow creeps in, he uses a game of hoops to drive it away.

His passion for the game developed as a youngster on the outdoor court of a church in the neighborhood. Arthur fondly recalls the nights when he shot baskets alone in the dark, imagining game situations in which he responded with the winning touch.

Now a man's touch is needed and he shoulders the added responsibilities with no complaints. Speaking with the maturity that his coach refers to, Arthur said "anybody could use this to do bad, but that's not what my mom installed in us. My sister and I talk about the fact we were both put on this earth to do something."

Arthur is serious about his senior studies at Benson. He uses two study halls to free up time for basketball and, if the homework still isn't finished, he stays after school to complete the work.

He also was diligent over the summer months in sharpening his game for the coming high school season. Arthur traveled the country with a select all-star team and also played in two area summer leagues with his buddies from Benson.

Shelsta extends a strong compliment in comparing Arthur to one of his best players ever at Benson, Andre Woolridge. Shelsta says both are big, strong and play with the same slashing offense and relentless defense.

Style points for dunks may favor Arthur because Shelsta says there are usually two or three flashy moves in flight before the ball finally crashes through the net.

At 6-3, Arthur's Division I future will be at one or two guard, and his goal is to attract an offer from a top-rated school in academics.

Arthur says confidently, "After what I've been through it will be hard for someone to stop me."

No doubt. nsa

John Knicely is news co-anchor at WOWT-TV (Channel 6) in Omaha.

Photos by Tony Petersen

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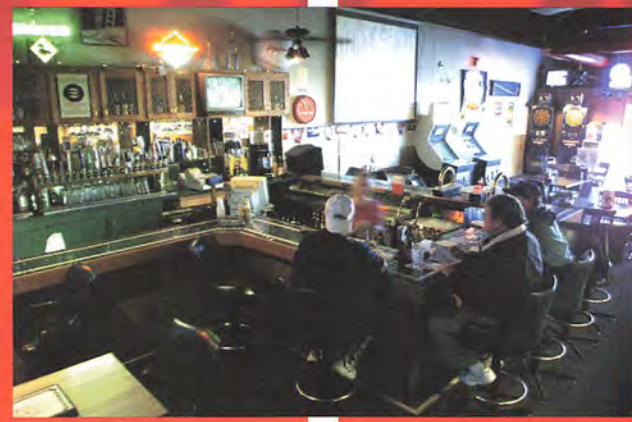

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Two EXCEPTIONS

by Kevin Warneke

Male Athlete of the Month
Jarod Obering

Female Athlete of the Month
Jessica Weishahn

No surprise, but Beatrice High's boys and girls basketball coaches have high expectations for their returning all-state players.

While all-state squads typically are filled with seniors, the Beatrice boys and girls squads have the luxury of sporting a returning all-state player on each of their rosters. The Beatrice coaches plan to make the most of their season and their all-state players.

"He's the coach on the floor. He runs the show," Beatrice boys' coach Jim Weeks said of his 5-foot-9 point guard, Jarod Obering.

"Last year, we didn't get her enough looks. When she gets her feet set, she can knock the three-pointers down," said Lady Orange girls' coach Steve Hartman of his 5-foot-9 shooting guard, Jessica Weishahn.

While Weeks and Hartman have high expectations for their all-staters, they also like the way their teams stack up on paper and in the gym. The boys' squad returns four starters, including Obering. The girls' team returns five players, including Weishahn, who have starting experience.

The coaches are quick to point out that Obering and Weishahn won't carry the entire load for their Beatrice teams. They will, however, be expected to lead the charge, Weeks and Hartman said.

That's OK with Obering and Weishahn. With the game on the line, they said, they're comfortable with the ball in their hands.

"Ever since middle school," Obering said, "I've had that role."

Scoring points won't be a problem for the Beatrice boys' team, Obering said.

"We have plenty of scorers," he said. "I need to do a better job of distributing the ball. Some people said I didn't do that enough last season."

Beatrice's boys finished 17-5 last season, good enough for a No. 5 ranking in Class B despite falling in their district final to Lincoln Pius. Obering did his part on the season, averaging 16.9 points per game, shooting 54 percent from the floor and 48 percent from three-point range, his coach said.

"Those are pretty good numbers," Weeks said.

Although he also plays football and runs track, Obering said basketball has been his sport from the beginning.

"Basketball is his thing," Weeks said. "He does it every day. He has put in a great deal of time."

Obering, who was named first-

Beatrice's basketball squads are blessed with two returning all-staters.

team all-state by the Omaha World-Herald and second-team all-state by the Lincoln Journal Star, plans to play basketball in college.

Right now, he's looking at Southwest Minnesota State, North Dakota or Northern State (in Aberdine, S.D.)

Weeks said Obering, to his credit, didn't get hung up worrying about playing NCAA Division I basketball. There's plenty of good basketball played at the Division II and NAIA levels, the coach said.

Obering, who played on Beatrice's state championship team as a freshman, said he gained valuable experience – "playing against guys quicker that I was" – while competing with the Runza-Bison select team this summer. That experience could translate into victories this season, his coach said.

Last season, the Orangemen were dominated by underclassmen. This year, Weeks is looking for more consistency from his older and wiser team.

The Orangemen typically set high standards for themselves each season – and this year is no different. "Our expectations are extremely high – a state championship," Obering said. "Most definitely that's what we want this year."

The Lady Orange's quest for a state championship of their own must go through South Sioux City, the perennial Class B girls' basketball power.

Last year, South Sioux throttled the Lady Orange. This year might be different, Weishahn said.

Hartman and Weishahn said Beatrice has plenty of ammunition, beginning with its veteran squad. The Lady Orange went 13-0, including a win over Des Moines Dowling, at Creighton University's summer camp.

The Beatrice girls went 17-4 last season, but fell to Lincoln Pius in district semi-final action. Weishahn, named first-team all-state by the Journal Star and second-team by the World-Herald, was never better in the loss, scoring 24 points.

Weishahn also played well in the lopsided defeat by South Sioux City. After a first-quarter humiliation against South Sioux, Weishahn showed maturity by coming out strong in the second quarter and scoring 10 points. "I just went out there and tried to make something happen," Weishahn said. Truth be told, she said, the loss was difficult. "I didn't want to be out there."

"This year, I think we can play with them."

Individually, Weishahn said, she needs to work on her lay-ups. Occasionally last season, Weishahn found herself breaking away for an easy basketball – only to miss. No excuses, just a desire to correct a weakness.

Weishahn played the point last season, but Hartman hopes to take some of the pressure off his all-stater by switching her to the shooting guard spot. Beatrice has quality ball-handlers, the coach said, which will allow Weishahn to focus on other aspects of the game.

The switch suits Weishahn just fine.

Weishahn, a four-year starter in volleyball who switched from setter to outside hitter this season, said she's keeping her options open for college athletics. "It (her favorite) goes back and forth," she said, "to whatever sport I happen to be playing." nsa

PLAY OVERVIEW

The Fullback Trap has been one of Nebraska's bread-and-butter plays for years. It fits in cleanly with the triple-option scheme and is the perfect way to keep defenses honest on the outside.

It is a classic "power football" play that also requires speed and timing. It is a quick-hitting play that, if executed properly, is virtually guaranteed to gain three or four yards every time. The trap-blocking scheme gives the line advantageous angles of attack while the close handoff, fullback carry and pile-up tackle contributes to the ball control objectives of maintaining possession, moving down the field and using up clock time.

Nebraska has been able to utilize this play so effectively and so consistently because of its focus on developing agile and strong linemen as well as strong and smart fullbacks.

A trap block is intended by design to create advantageous angles for the offensive blockers. The play-side guard and the center block down, taking the next man to the left of the hole for each, allowing them to seal pursuit from the backside. The play-side tackle and tight end execute a cross-block, again providing themselves with good angles for drive blocking. The backside guard then pulls around behind the center and in front of the play to knock the untouched (and hopefully unsuspecting) defensive tackle out of the hole from the blind side. The name "trap" is derived from the setup of the defensive tackle, who is lured into the backfield only to be "trapped" by the pulling guard and blasted out of the play.

ASSIGNMENTS

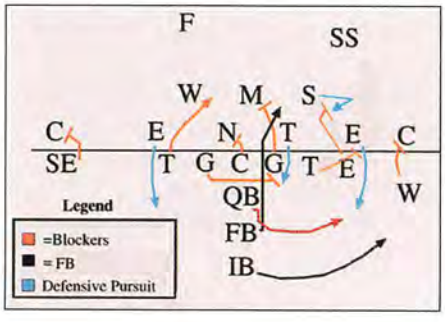
While the play can be run from nearly any formation, we are showing the Fullback Trap run out of the Huskers' historical standby, the I-Formation.

The play is, at first, indistinguishable from the option — forcing the defense to spend a crucial second reading the play, rather than attacking.

The quarterback reverse-pivots as the backside guard pulls. The I-back moves laterally to the play-side as on an option. The fullback, after a half-second pause, barrels straight off of the play-side guard's inside shoulder. The play-side tackle is responsible for sealing his outside, preventing a rushing DE or OLB from stopping the play in the backfield. The play-side guard is responsible for a downfield block on a LB, while the DT is left unattended, for a moment. He is picked up by the pulling guard and blasted broadsides, out of the play. The center seals the middle, keeping the NG or a scraping LB from flowing to the hole. The quarterback and I-back, after the handoff, carry out their option fake to the outside.

The initial fake of the option by the quarterback and I-back is crucial. The play must start off selling the option, to get the linebackers and defensive front flowing to the playside, in order to herd them right into the waiting lineman, barreling in at their angle blocks.

The fullbacks initial pause also can help sell the triple option fake, and often you will see a fullback hunch over as if he were actually faking the run, even when he has the ball. The most crucial assignment of all, though, is that of the pulling guard. He must get a solid block on the defensive tackle. If he misses, the play will likely be stopped behind the line. The guard also must be quick. Many a promising FB Trap has been stopped dead in its tracks as the fullback tripped over his too-slow guard and lost the valuable split-second when his hole was open.



OPPORTUNITIES

The Fullback Trap contributes mightily to the effectiveness of the option — the two feed off of each other, keeping defenses guessing. The more successful you are at running the option, the more effectively you can run the trap, and the more effective you run the trap, the more hesitant the defense will be to bite early on an option.

The play also can open up a quick play-action slant pass, with the quarterback faking the handoff (forcing the LBs to step up), taking a quick drop, and hitting a streaking tight end or wingback over the middle. After a few successful attempts, the

Fullback Trap can open up an end-around as well; a wingback or tight end can pull across the play and receive the handoff from the QB, following a fake to the FB. If the defense has sold out on the trap, the end may find a wide-open field once he hits the corner.

DEFENSE

Defending the Fullback Trap requires strong defensive linemen and linebackers. The trapped man can not allow himself to be blown out of the play, nor can he afford to overpenetrate. The DT must be able to read and react, stand their ground, and plug their hole. A solid middle linebacker is crucial: He must be able to quickly read and react to plug the hole and stop the FB in his tracks. Stunts on the defensive line have the potential to disrupt the trap blocks but also may take defenders out of the play. As always, stunts are a gamble against a team that runs a good Fullback Trap. nsa

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BIKE MASTERS PRESENTS

Pigskin passion

One of a Kind

Turner Gill is in no hurry to be the head man

By Terry L. Henion Photos by Tony Petersen

There is no "master" plan when it comes to Turner Gill's coaching career, at least not one employed by him. The former University of Nebraska star quarterback and now quarterbacks coach for the Huskers figures such a life direction is better decided by a higher power.

"Whatever happens with my career, or my life, is in God's hands," Gill said. "I have always believed that He puts us right where he wants us to be."

For the past nine years, Gill, 38, has been firmly entrenched on the Husker coaching staff. And his contributions to the Nebraska successes have been notably documented. And noticed by others. For when fans and others begin talking about young coaches who might someday become a head coach, invariably Gill's name comes up.

He has heard the rumors. Gill has listened to the fan chat, the talk shows, all of it. He knows that his name is "out there" as potentially being a head coach some day. But so far, that's all it is…talk.

"Have I ever spoken to an athletic director somewhere about being a head coach? No, I have not," Gill said. "Have I spoken to officials at other school, a college president or anybody like that? No. It has never come up, not a single time.

"All of that stuff starts with you

"My playing career here at Nebraska gave me the chance to learn from some of the best coaches there have ever been"

guys (the media) and the fans pick up on it. Do I have a career goal of being a head coach? No. Would I like to be a head coach someday? I don't know yet. Am I preparing to become a head coach? I would like to think that being the quarterbacks coach at the University of Nebraska certainly would be good preparation for something like that, should it ever come to be.

"But let me make this point. Do I wake up every day thinking about being a head football coach somewhere? No. What I do is wake up and try to make each day the best one it can possibly be."

Others have noticed Gill's charisma and coaching ability, though, as well as his ability to relate to today's athletes. And Gill has helped produce some of the top quarterbacks in Nebraska football history: Tommie Frazier, Scott Frost and now Eric Crouch.

Nebraska athletic director Bill Byrne has said several times that Turner Gill is a young coach that many football programs would be fortunate to have as their head man.

Gill's athletic background is beyond reproach. A native of Fort Worth, Texas, Gill was a highly recruited option quarterback and Nebraska won out over the likes of Oklahoma and Texas for his services. Barry Switzer, then the Sooners' head coach, said publicly that losing Gill to Nebraska was one of the biggest recruiting defeats of his career.

In his three years as a starter for the Huskers, Gill was magnificent, leading Nebraska to a 28-2 record and three straight conference championships. One of the renowned "Triplets," along with Irving Fryar and Mike Rozier, Gill finished third in the Heisman Trophy balloting as a senior.

The final play of his collegiate career, though, was an incomplete rollout pass on a two-point conversion that would have given the Huskers an unbeaten season, a win over Miami in the Orange Bowl and the national title. As it was, Nebraska fell to the Hurricanes 31-30 and finished second in the national standings.

"My playing career here at Nebraska gave me the chance to learn from some of the best coaches there have ever been," Gill said.

Tom Osborne, then the Husker head man, has been perhaps the most influential person in Gill's athletic life.

"I have always been so impressed with the way that Coach Osborne relates to people, cares about them off the field, even more than he does on the field," Gill said. "Coach Osborne is a giant of a man in my mind."

During his four-year Nebraska career, Gill completed 231 of 428 passes for 3,317 yards and 34 touchdowns. He also ran for 1,317 yards and 18 touchdowns. In his senior season, Gill was named a first team All-American.

He then spent two years with the Montreal Concordes in the Canadian Football League and followed that with three years in the Cleveland and Detroit minor league baseball system.

In 1989, he enrolled at North Texas University where he earned a bachelor's degree in behavior science in 1990. He also served as a volunteer assistant on the football staff.

"After my playing days were over, I sat down and thought about what I could do that would still fulfill my competitive needs," Gill said. "I talked with Coach Osborne about it and he suggested that I might want to consider coaching."

After one season at North Texas, Gill was invited by Osborne to become a graduate assistant for the Huskers. He then went to SMU as a grad assistant for another year and was named the team's full-time receivers coach. But in August of 1992, Osborne called with an offer to become the Huskers' quarterbacks coach.

"I am a Husker," Gill said.

And now, nine years later, Gill is being recognized nationally for his prowess in developing multi-talented quarterbacks at Nebraska. It has not come without its share of cost.

"The biggest surprise to me in becoming a coach was the number of hours it requires," Gill said. "You have to have a family behind you that understands the demands of your job. To be honest, we rarely ever get a day off until February and many of those are

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"My family (wife Gayle and daughters Jordan, 10, and Margaux, 6) prays about it constantly, to give us strength. Our faith sees us through every situation and we all are convinced that God will have our best interests in mind, whatever that may turn out to be. If I become a head coach someday, it will be His will. If not, whatever comes along will be His will, too."

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"My family (wife Gayle and daughters Jordan, 10, and Margaux, 6) prays about it constantly, to give us strength. Our faith sees us through every situation and we all are convinced that God will have our best interests in mind, whatever that may turn out to be. If I become a head coach someday, it will be His will. If not, whatever comes along will be His will, too."

For certain, whatever comes along, Gill will seek Osborne's counsel, he said.

"Coach Osborne always has time for me," Gill said. "We talk often and not just about football, either. I watched close up how he has always handled different personalities, even during the Lawrence Phillips thing. What people didn't understand about Coach Osborne was this … he had the well-being of Lawrence Phillips in the front of his mind. It had nothing to do with what was right or wrong for the football program or the school or what fans wanted. Coach Osborne was trying to save a young man.

"I saw people being critical of him and I just wish they knew him like I do, like all of his players do. Coach Osborne cares about people."

With Nebraska having another banner year and Crouch's name being bandied about for the Heisman, Gill is sure to get even more attention from the media and perhaps even from athletic directors at schools who will be looking for a new head coach. Gill said he will take whatever comes the same way he always has – in stride.

"If I am meant to be a head coach somewhere, I will do that," he said. "If I am meant to stay here at Nebraska, that is what will happen. And if God means for me to do something else, I will accept that, too."

Talk about triple options . . . Even now Gill, in talking about his career, is allowing the game to come to him. nsa

Catch Him if You Can

Eric Moody wants the high school football community to know he's ready to run

Photo by Tony Petersen

By Jack Denker

Midway through the first quarter of the Auburn Bulldogs' 34-10 victory over the Waverly Vikings last month, Eric Moody delivered a message. It was the kind of message that witnesses don't forget, and it may well serve as part of his ever-increasing legacy.

The Bulldogs led 7-0 as Moody took a handoff from sophomore quarterback Brent Cole and ran through a sizeable hole on the left side of the line. As Moody raced into the secondary, a Viking safety caught up with him near the sideline. Moody stutter-stepped and then stiff-armed the defender, carrying him for five yards before scoring a touchdown.

It was an electrifying play that certainly had all who saw it thinking one thing: This isn't the Eric Moody of a year ago.

The message was clear: You can't stop Eric Moody, you can only hope to contain him. The image of Moody as nothing more than a dependable running back gave way to something different: The vision of a young man, who as a high school senior, is playing at the top of his game.

Moody finished with a school record 321 yards on 34 carries and scored four touchdowns against Waverly.

Photo by Tony Petersen

"We didn't want to work him (Moody) that much," Auburn Coach Dave Carlson said. "Our game plan was that we wanted to mix in the pass more. But as the game got started, we kind of felt that we were going to have more success on the ground, so we jumped on our horse and let him lead us to victory."

As spectacular as Moody was that night, the effort he has put into getting better during the past three years has been even more impressive. Auburn has gone 22-7 in games Moody has either started or played in during that time.

Last season, Moody earned all-state honors while leading Class B in rushing with 1,905 yards and 21 touchdowns. He's currently on-pace to have an even bigger senior season. Like a fine wine, Moody just keeps getting better with age.

"I don't think he's reached his full potential yet," Carlson said. "He's still learning. As a sophomore, he was more of a finesse runner. As a junior he became more of a student of the game. Now, through strength training and hard work he's become the kind of back that can make you miss, or run over you, and gain positive yards after contact. Generally, it takes more than one person to bring him down."

Moody credits the time he spends in the weight room, where he has improved his bench press to 280 pounds while dropping his 40-yard dash time to 4.53 seconds, for his continued improvement as a runner.

"I want to be known as a player who gives 110 percent all the time," Moody said. "I've always had self-confidence in my abilities, but now my work habits have allowed me to come at you in different ways."

This combination of greater strength and speed has turned Moody into a major college football prospect. Moody said he currently is being recruited by Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas State, UNO and Northwest Missouri State. Carlson thinks Moody ranks with the state's best.

"He's the best back I've ever coached in 23 years," Carlson said. "He's the total package. He's got a low center of gravity, with great vision. He follows his blocks well because he is intelligent. He's also very durable.

It's a credit to his conditioning, that he's prepared his body for the rigors of playing football. He's a pure running back whose vision and smarts set him apart and make him a notch better."

While Moody acknowledges that his running style – which he patterns after his favorite player, Edgerrin James of the Indianapolis Colts – has played a big part in his team and personal success, he also recognizes the fact that he can't do it alone.

"I do consider myself an impact player as I do all the other 10 guys who are on the field with me," Moody said. "I think we make an impact on the game one way or another. My goal is to help this team out in any way possible to get a win on any given Friday night." nsa

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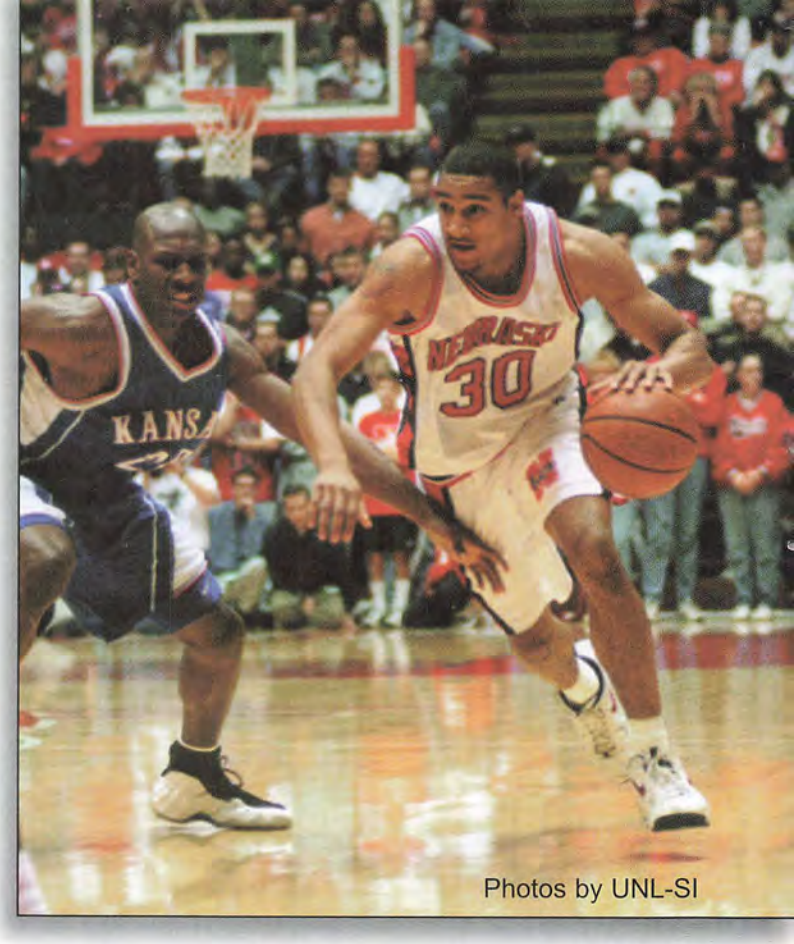
Cookie Belcher



Photos by UNL-SI

A Defensive Monster on the Court

by Michael Watkins

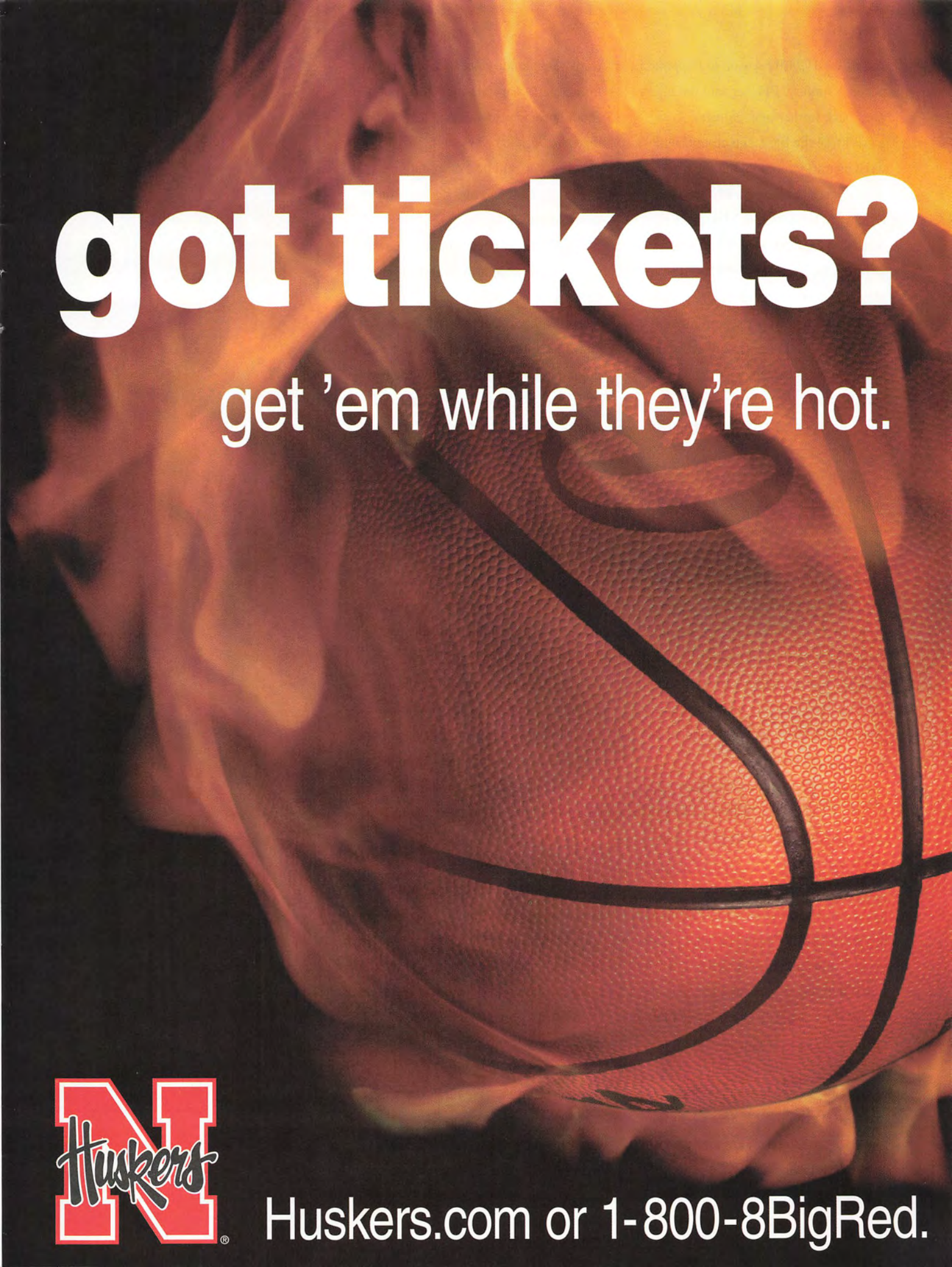
When Segado Belcher was a toddler, no older than 2, his aunt caught him with his hand in the proverbial cookie jar — literally.

"She said I was always eating cookies, all kinds, it didn't matter," said Belcher, better known to his teammates and basketball fans as "Cookie." "From that moment on, she called me Cookie, and pretty soon, everyone, my family and friends, started following her lead and calling me Cookie. Now it's what I go by, although I still register for classes by my birth name, and my driver's license has my real name on it."

And although his aunt never resorted to calling him "Cookie Monster," he has certainly become a monster of sorts on the basketball court despite a major setback at the start of his senior year that kept him out of the game and off the court since last fall.

After a year's absence (all but four games) due to a wrist injury, Belcher received a medical redshirt from the NCAA and returns for his fifth year of Nebraska basketball.

Although he aggravated the injury during a game against Colorado near the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end of the 1998-99 season to the point of needing surgery, Belcher said the injury goes back further than college.

"I tore the ligaments in my right wrist against Colorado, but the problem started back in high school," said Belcher, who starred at Mexico High School in Mexico, Mo. "I had surgery on it during the summer (1999), and I played in four of the first eight games last season, but my wrist continued to bother me. I fell on it during practice, and I knew something was wrong, because it not only hurt, but it also was affecting my shot. I had no strength in my wrist.

"But it (wrist) feels really good now. While I was rehabilitating, I worked quite a bit on strengthening my wrist and breaking down my shot. I started off shooting with a volleyball from about five feet away, and then built my way back out. Now, when I shoot, my shot feels a lot better and it's improved a lot. With the injury, I wasn't strong enough, but I've been working on my technique, especially getting my elbow under the ball when I shoot."

Under first-year coach, Barry Collier, Belcher, one of four seniors, will be looked upon to help lead this year's youth movement.

"Cookie is more of a doer than a talker, which is a great attribute, but at the same time it's beneficial that he be vocal," said Collier, who arrived in Lincoln in the off-season after 11 years at Butler University. "He hasn't been in the position to lead since he was in high school. He's not used to taking command. He's very comfortable doing it by example. This will be a new realm for him. We need to have him really be a more vocal leader.

"By being healthy, he will help the team a whole lot more this year. He was limited last year with his injury, but he should provide tremendous leadership this year."

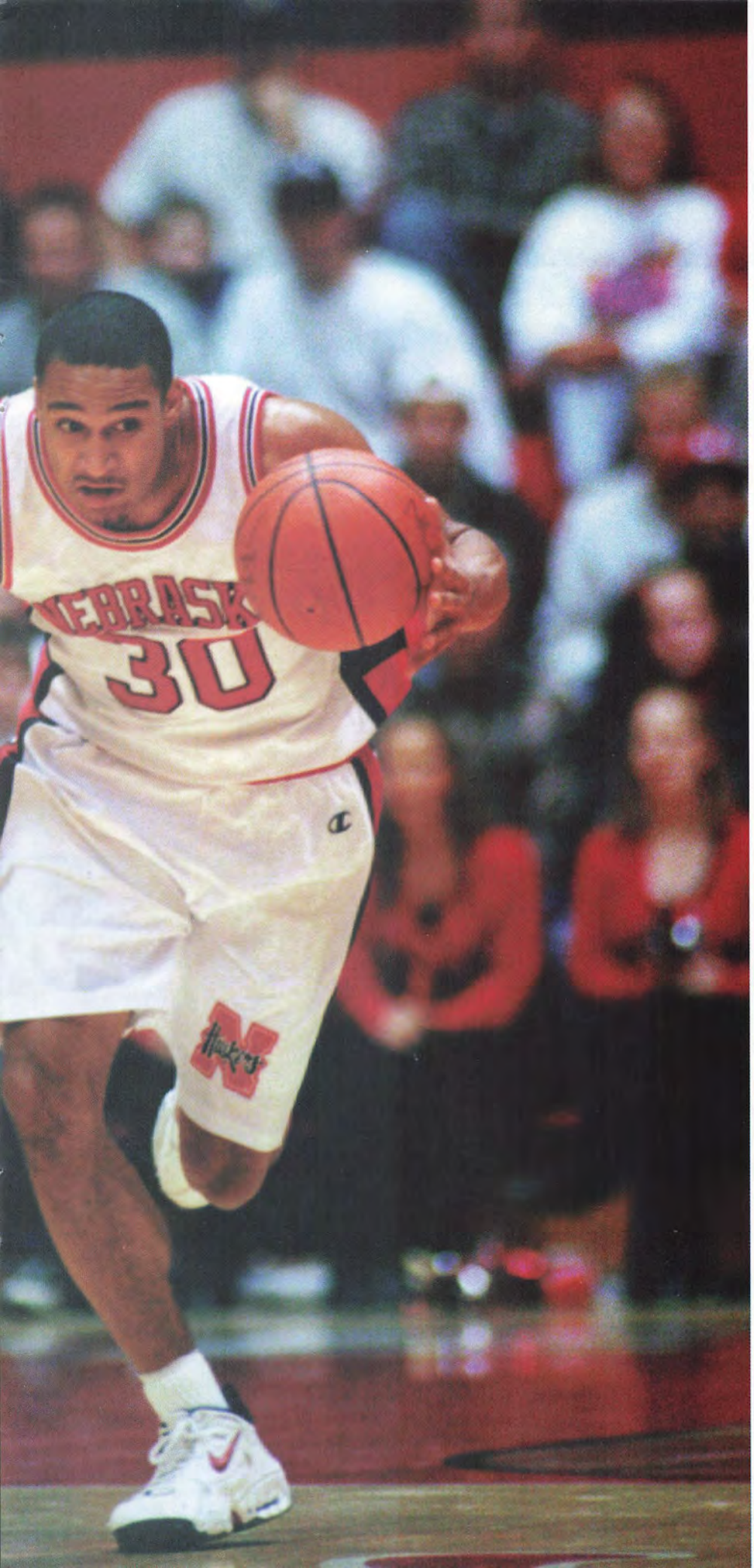
Belcher said he's definitely up to exceeding Collier's and his teammates' expectations.

"I've never been one to turn away from my responsibilities, and I think being seen as a leader on this team is a responsibility of mine," said Belcher, a cousin of former Husker Tyronn Lue. "I think it goes back to my childhood when my parents separated and I had to take care of my little brother.

"This year, I definitely want to be a more vocal leader, but I'm not sure that it's who I am. I'm more of a leader by example – to show my teammates what I'm doing for the whole team. But to be an overall leader, I know I'll have to work a little more on pumping up the players – motivate them to succeed and believe that we can win."

Leading by example is definitely something that has always come naturally for Belcher, even as far back as high school, where he averaged 24 points and eight rebounds and earned all-state recognition his sophomore, junior and senior seasons.

He was an immediate starter for Danny Nee in 1996 as a true freshman, and averaged nine points (fifth on team) and nearly four rebounds per game. He bettered that his sophomore year, when he again started every game at guard and averaged 11 points and four rebounds, but he really made a name for himself as a defensive standout with 75 steals and was named to the Big 12 All-Defensive team. He bettered that number with 102 steals his junior year and set a new Nebraska and Big 12 record in the process. Again, he was named to the Big



12 All-Defensive team.

"There's no doubt that Cookie is an outstanding defensive player, but it's in his offensive work that I've noticed the most improvement," Collier said. "He has incredible athletic ability, and he's a very aggressive defensive player, and he commits to that part of the game. But he's devoted a substantial amount of time in the off-season improving his offensive skills, and that will really pay off for him because he is so athletic and can do so many things."

Cookie agrees, but his defense has always been something that has come naturally for the 6-foot-4 guard.

"I've never really had to work on my defense, even in high school," said Belcher, Nebraska's all-time leader in steals and the NCAA's active leader in steals (271). "In college, I've gotten a lot of steals because I anticipate where the ball is headed at certain times during the game. I read the guy's eyes to see what's going on behind me, and I constantly watch the player's tendencies with his dribble and passing so I can anticipate and react to make the steal. I just comes easy to me, and I use that to my advantage."

And even though he has made a name for himself as one of the top defensive players in the country and is expected to be playing next fall in the NBA, there's more to Cookie Belcher than fast hands and athletic moves — even though he isn't one to call attention to himself.

"I'm a person just like everybody else; I like rap, hip-hop and R&B music, horror movies and comedies, and I like to hang out just like everybody else," Belcher said. "I'm a very relaxed person. I like to go out and have a good time, but I also know when it's time to get down to business. I let my accomplishments speak for me. nsa

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Amanda Went

First in Line

by Jimmy Sheil
Photos by UNL-SID

A tenet of coach-speak is the usual blah about seniors needing to lead, and the quickly becoming classic "we need to start steppin' up."

However, Nebraska Coach Paul Sanderford isn't just babbling with a squad of 12 of 15 underclassmen and one returning starter from last year's team. But a Columbus, Neb., senior will try to step it up for the fourth-year coach.

"Being a senior I have a different role," said guard Amanda Went. "We lost a lot good players and have so many new players. I know what coach Sanderford wants, and he is really intense. He doesn't want excuses, he expects you to come in everyday ready to practice and not slack off."

Went is becoming this year what Sanderford hopes will become a cornerstone of his quickly rising program with players stepping up and providing leadership for the younger charges. Sanderford said he doesn't want his program to be cyclical, rather year after year plugging in the right players with the program not missing a beat.

"Amanda has to be a floor leader and bring a lot of energy to the team," Sanderford said. "She needs to get on people when needed, and she's earned the respect of her teammates with the way she works."

Went will be showing some highly touted freshman the way, including Los Angeles-area players 6-1 forward Shannon Howell, a top 50 national prospect, from Playa Del Ray, Calif.; and 5-10 point guard Alexa Johnson, regarded as the No. 2 point guard in California, out of Hacienda Heights, Calif. Howell and Johnson are believed to be the first Husker recruits to be invited to attend either the prestigious Nike or Adidas high school summer camps.

Local top recruits for 2000 include KC Cowgill from Grand Island, the Nebraska girls high school all-time points leader. Also, 6-3 center Katie Morse from Tri-Center Community High School in Neola, Iowa may be a Husker star in the future.

Went, dubbed "A-Dub" by her teammates, has shown the younger players the way on the court by making the most 3-pointers on the team last year, but she also can relate to a younger player's transition to college from comfy home.

"When I was a freshman, I'd go home every weekend to Columbus," Went said. "Now I don't go back to Columbus on weekends, and my mom and dad get a little upset. But I have things to do here."

Went has used that weekend to lead the young team. Through fall conditioning and pick-up games, Went is showing the youngsters what is expected at this level. Went believes a young player's mentalities must be developed in the preseason by going hard after each other in practice games and push each other.

Johnson had an example from two-days when Went pushed the whole team during the week of practice.

"Amanda really took charge in two-a-days," Johnson said. "We were running a drill where we had to make a certain number of shots and we couldn't get through it. She kind of called time-out, huddled us up and said 'C'mon ladies, we're getting this done.' And we completed it on the next try."

Went took note of some able leaders when she was an underclassman at Nebraska. She had good examples to learn from in departed All-American Nicole Kubik,
All-Big 12 Brooke Schwartz and

"And Coach Sanderford was a factor because he is intense, kind of crazy, but he really cares about you. And he lets you know the truth and that not always the case in recruiting."

Charlie Rogers, as those players were the nucleuses of a Nebraska record three straight NCAA tourney teams, and concluded last year with a first-round loss to Boston College 93-76.

Those players who accounted for more than one-half the offense and one-half of the rebounds and took the program to heights not seen under former coach Angela Beck, who left abruptly in the summer of 1997 to pursue an opportunity with the now defunct American Basketball League.

The timing of the coaching change is partly responsible for the uneven mix of young and old, experienced and inexperienced players as recruiting was "pretty much out the window in 1997." Senior Casey Leonhardt, a 6-5 center from Downers Grove, Ill., is the only returning starter after averaging 9.8 points and 6.2 rebounds in 1999.

Not only will Went be looked to pick up some scoring but some newcomers also may figure in the Huskers' plans due to some personnel changes. Mainly, the departure of junior point guard Melody Peterson, who left the team for personal reasons at the end of last season, which may open up a spot for Howell. Sanderford said the 2000 Huskers may depend on some youngsters, and the freshmen may have to learn on the run, especially in his up-tempo style of offense.

"Howell has a shot at playing as a freshman and that is somewhat unusual," Sanderford said. "But everything looks so easy for her on the court and she is so smooth. Kind of like she is floating on air when she's playing basketball."

Floating or otherwise, Howell wonders how she ended up at Nebraska.

"To come to Nebraska was kind out of nowhere and it wasn't looking too seriously early on," Howell said. "I heard Nebraska and all I thought were cornfields. But I came here and everything clicked.

"And Coach Sanderford was a factor because he is intense, kind of crazy, but he really cares about you. And he lets you know the truth and that not always the case in recruiting."

Sanderford emphasizes Johnson's "blue-collar attitude and physicalness" and Howell's play-making ability at the point and her quickness. But aside from the verbiage, the players have something not every player possesses.

"Both LA kids, Shannon and Alexa, has that knack, a little bit of cockiness, and I like that," Sanderford said.

Armed with his type of team built around an up-tempo style with offense and man-to-man defense, Sanderford showed he has a little bit of that cockiness in regard to his young team.

"By Big 12 tourney time, no one is going to want to play us," Sanderford said. "They will want to be in the other bracket in the tournament. On a given night we can do some damage.

"And for me looking down the bench every night and seeing 12 kids who are going to be here for a couple of years is comforting."

A picture from Went's sophomore year, in which a smiling Sanderford has his arm around her during a game, illustrates the manner he will try to coach these young players, Went said.

"I threw a bounce pass into the post and it got deflected because it didn't have the right angle," Went said. "Coach had just got done telling me that I needed a better angle. He just smiled and reminded me what he just said. He's always teaching like that."

A little of Sanderford's confident style has rubbed off on Went. The senior bristled when she was asked about the modest preseason projections for the 2000 Huskers.

"We are picked seventh and that is the lowest since I've been here," Went said. "We won't finish seventh. I will guarantee you that."

Sounds like Went is planning on "steppin' up." nsa

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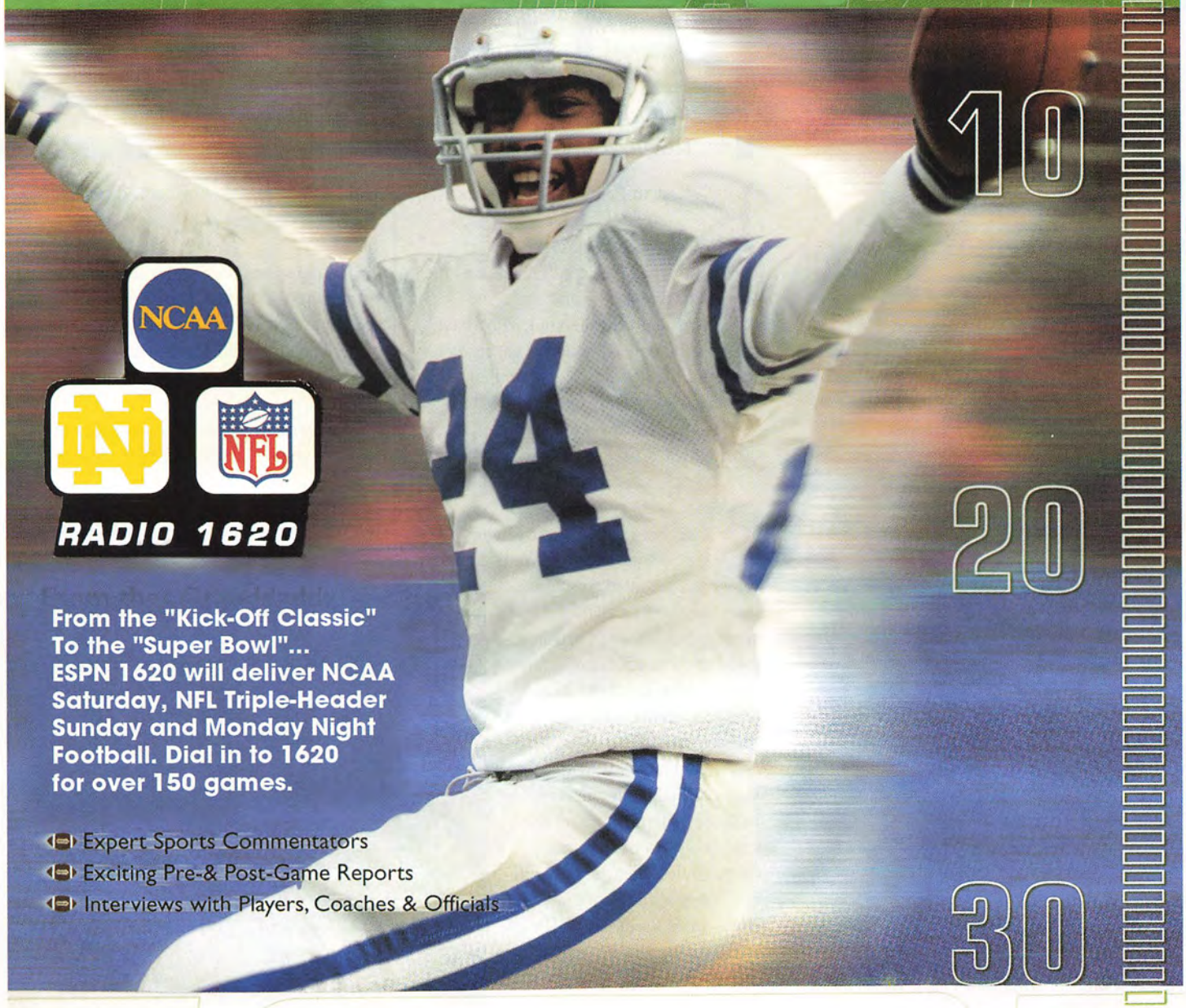

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MAVERICKS BASKETBALL

Next in Line

by Kevin Warneke

Kevin Lehman and Lisa Carlson are looking for a few good men and women.

Both UNO basketball teams lost their two leading scorers – and must find replacements to fill the void. They have strong candidates, but aren't yet ready to anoint the newest leaders on their Maverick basketball squads.

It's a rite of passage, or sorts. The cream always rises to the top, and the UNO coaches are ready to wait until the process runs its course.

Gone from the Maverick men's squad are Mike Simons and Bob Wettstein, who together accounted for more than one-third of UNO's scoring last season. Carlson lost Darcy Stracke and Sarah Larson, who averaged 22.6 and 12.2 points per game respectively.

Lehman and Carlson, first year coach, take the departures in stride. There's nothing they can do – short of rewriting NCAA rules regarding eligibility. "They all have to graduate some time," Lehman said.

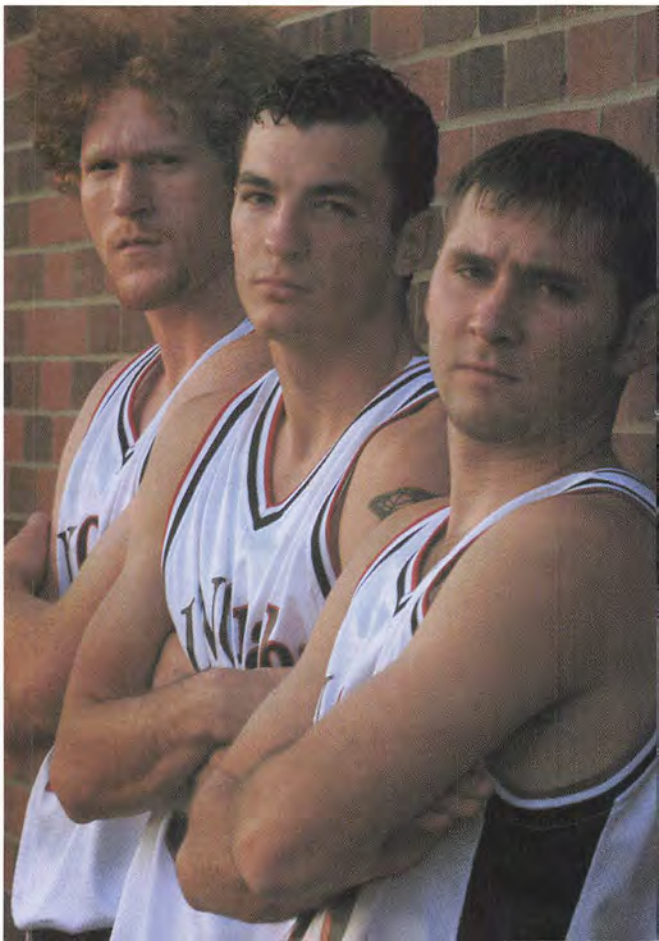
Simons will be especially missed. He came from Wahoo High, which had transformed into a high school basketball powerhouse, and was part of Lehman's first recruiting class at UNO. "He became a Maverick when it wasn't cool to be one," his coach said.

While Lehman had Simons for four years and Wettstein for three, Carlson had just one season with Stracke. She doesn't spend time doting on what ifs, but...

Stracke was something special. Sometimes bringing a player of her caliber – Stracke was an two-time All-American at the University of Nebraska at Kearney before transferring – into a program can mean adjustments for the others. "We would have adjusted even better to Darcy's game if we had her for another year," Carlson said. "Darcy can do a lot of things.

"Which leaves some huge questions."

Jennifer Mitchell said UNO will feel



UNO's men's and women's basketball teams have some big shoes to fill

Stracke's departure: "She's a great player. We're going to miss her a lot."

Lehman and Carlson who replaced Paula Buscher, must look for players to fill those scoring voids. They're looking for that go-to player who, in a clutch, can step forward and deliver.

Both have plenty of candidates.

On the men's side, Corey Hahn, all-NCC honorable mention last season, Patrick Voss and Alan Lainio have prime-time game experience. Hahn, who averaged 11.1 points per game, is UNO's top returning scorer. UNO finished 18-11 last season, but just 10-8 in conference play.

Somewhat unproven, but strong possibilities, Lehman said, are sophomores Seth Nelson and Dan Morrow. "Both shot better than 40 percent from three," Lehman said. "That's pretty good."

Hahn said he'd like to apply for the job of team leader. So would Nelson. Both quickly point out that if not them, UNO boasts plenty of other capable players.

"I will accept some of the leadership role on this team," said Hahn, who has started 34 games for UNO. "I'm the type of player who wants the ball when we need a basketball."

With leadership comes responsibilities – and Nelson said he's ready to make that leap. "I'm ready to take that last shot."

Lehman said UNO fans should expect to see a fast-paced, hard-pressing squad. Rebounding could be key to the team's success. "We've always been a good rebounding team."

"We're very confident. "We have more talent, we just don't have experienced talent."

The Mavericks won't come unprepared, Hahn said. "We're going to be in every game, and our heads are going to be in every game."

There's more, he said. "I think we'll be a lot of fun to watch."

First in line for Carlson are her three upperclassman – Mitchell, Kari Kerkhoff and Anne Bomstad. Mitchell, now a junior, was the Maverick go-to player as a freshman – the year before Stracke transferred to UNO. "She had some late-game heroics," Carlson said.

Then, there's Erin Wessling, a freshman from Vinton Shellsburg High School in Vinton, Iowa. Wessling, a 5-10 Iowa all-stater, can swing between guard and forward. She's athletic, has been well-coached and has great range. "She can do some things offensively that could help us."

Someone will step forward to assume Stracke's role as team leader, Mitchell said. "Usually you have one or two players that you want the ball in their hands."

It might be hers, but it might be one of her teammates. "Sure I'd like to be that person."

Carlson said the 2000-'01 Maverick squad won't be much different from the one before. Look for an uptempo style of play, she said, and hope to see a better defensive squad.

Stracke's departure may have one positive aspect, Mitchell said: lower expectations for the UNO team.

"We're going to surprise some people," she said. "I don't think they'll have much respect for us – losing whom we did."

Wessling has her own spin on a team short of experience but potentially full of talent: "We just need to get down to business. We have enough talent that we should be a threat in the NCC.

"It's time for UNO women's basket-

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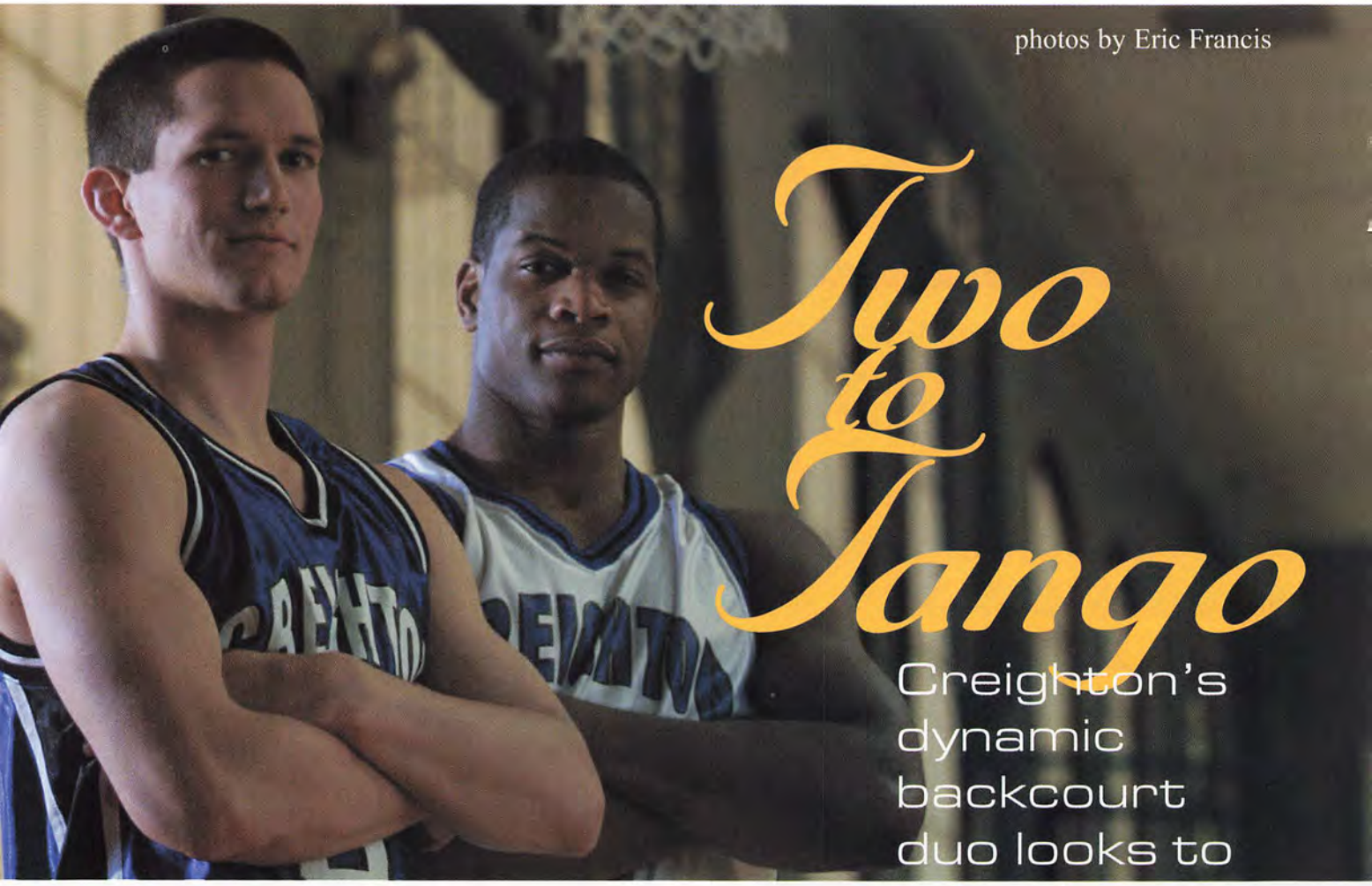

photos by Eric Francis

Two to Tango

Creighton's dynamic backcourt duo looks to take the Bluejays to another postseason berth

by Leo Biga

Entering their fourth season as Creighton University backcourt mates, Ryan Sears and Ben Walker form a versatile guard combo coaches can only dream about.

Alone, neither is a great player. In tandem, they pack a dynamic one-two punch. Paired together, their very different games perfectly complement each other. Besides being the squad's top returning scorers, rebounders, assist-makers and steal-artists, they are its savvy, undisputed leaders, comprising what Coach Dana Altman calls "the cornerstone" of a program riding the momentum of a school-record three consecutive post-season tournament appearances (including two NCAAs).

If, as expected, the Bluejays add a fourth straight postseason berth in 2001, Sears and Walker will have completed the most successful four-year run in CU hoops history.

Perhaps the greatest authority on CU hoops, former Creighton coach John "Red" McManus rates the duo among the best backcourt tandems in the program's guard-rich annals. "They're fine players. I'm really high on them. With those two, you always have a chance."

In sizing up the two, it is easy to see the obvious. One is slight. The other, a bull. One is Mr. Outside. The other, Mr. Inside.

At 6-0, Sears is the classic pint-sized point guard and floor general handling and distributing the ball with efficiency if not panache. He is on pace to break the Bluejays' all-time assists record (With 433 in 92 games, he needs 117 to break Ralph Bobik's mark.).

Meanwhile, Walker is the bruising off-guard playing bigger than his 6-2 height, slashing to the basket and crashing the boards with impressive ferocity (He pulls down 5.2 boards

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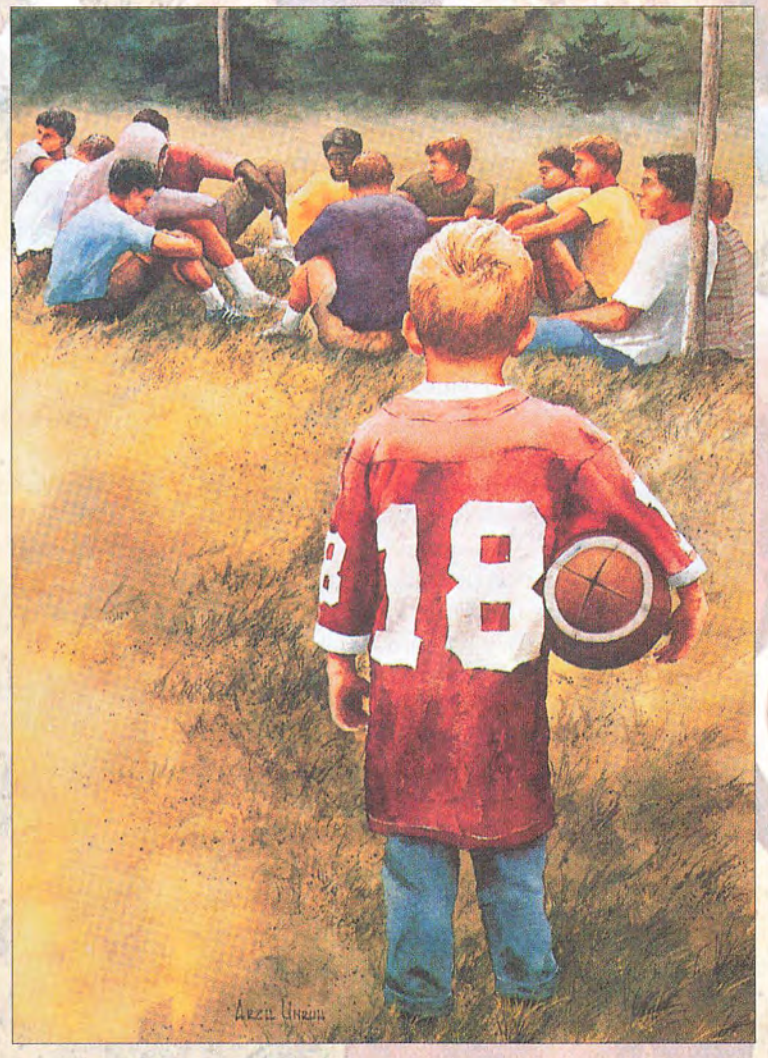

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a game).

On a team of long-range bombers, Sears takes and makes the most 3s. On a team without a dominant big man, Walker is the resident enforcer.

But that's not the whole story. Not by a long shot. Despite his less-than-imposing frame, Sears is a workhorse averaging some 34 minutes a game through three years. He often gives up his body to make hustle plays that change the momentum of contests. Altman, who calls Sears "a coach's dream," said his point guard's blue collar mentality and unselfishness are invaluable if overlooked traits.

"There are no categories in the stats for diving after loose balls or taking charges, but Ryan's on the floor all the time. Taking a charge is really a big swing in the college basketball game and Ryan does a great job of that. It's really giving yourself up for the team."

Plus, Sears mixes it up well enough under the glass to average 3.2 rebounds a game for his career (he ranked second on the squad last year behind Walker).

Walker's thickly muscled body belies the fact he has developed into a deadly three-point marksman. Last year, he placed second in the Missouri Valley Conference in field goal accuracy (at 51.2 percent) beyond the arc.

Shooting is one area where Walker concedes he has shown the greatest improvement. He also can penetrate and dish the ball off to open teammates, averaging nearly three assists a game.

But it is his banging under the boards that separates him from the pack. "You see a 6-2 guard who will go rebound with anybody – that's a competitive nature a coach can't teach. It's just something a young man has to have. His ability to go after the basketball is really something that lifts our team," Altman said.

On defense, the duo form a two-headed monster prowling the backcourt. They set traps, break picks, collapse screens and harass opponents into ill-advised passes and shots. In a testament to his pesky nature and consummate playmaking, Sears has more steals (210) than turnovers (189) for his career. While he is the school's all-time steals leader, averaging more than three per outing, Walker is no slouch either – averaging more than one swipe per contest.

Whether in practice or on game night, the pair bring a chest-to-chest, in-your-face intensity to everything they do. That, Altman said, will be their legacy.

"If I had to pick one word that defines Ryan and Ben, it's competitive. They'll do whatever it takes to win. They'll come every game and give you what they have. Some days in practice Ryan and Ben will work so hard just to try to get everybody to that same level. When I say they're the cornerstone of our program – that's what I mean. It's their work ethic and competitiveness. It raises our whole team's competitiveness."

Even opposing coaches admire the fervor the duo display. "I think their best quality is they really compete at everything in the game and play hard at both ends of the floor," Evansville Coach Jim Crews said. "What I see is two guys that want to win and don't get caught up in individual things. You have to play your best to beat them."

Sears, who hails from an athletic family, traces his drive to heated clashes against older brother, Todd, while growing up in Ankeny, Iowa.

"We'd play one-on-one. I'd beat him the first couple games and then we'd put money on it, and he'd just kill me. I hated losing to him. I just love to win. It's like that in everything."

Walker, who was born in South Carolina, grew up in Milwaukee and prepped in Oak Creek, Wis., said,

"Never in my athletic life have I ever wanted to come in second."

Despite varied backgrounds, he said, they are cut from the same cloth: "Ryan, is just like me. He hates to lose – even in pickup games. I like having him on my side. We respect each other."

Altman has engineered a dramatic turnaround at Creighton his first six seasons. "We've gotten a little more talented and a little more athletic, but that by itself wasn't going to make the big jump we made from 7 wins to 23 wins because there's a lot of teams we're playing that are just as talented or more talented than us. No, it's gotta be the work ethic and playing together and doing those things that give you a chance to beat those people," he said. "And Ryan and Ben have been the guys who have done that for our program."

That these two should be the bedrock of one of the best rebuilding stories in Division I is ironic considering neither was heavily recruited. Despite leading Ankeny High School to the Iowa 4A championship and earning first-team all-state honors as a senior, Sears did not get scholarship offers from Iowa or Iowa State.

The snub hurt, but after signing with CU he made the most of his chance in a program struggling to get above .500. Still, the ever-humble Sears said he had no designs on being a main contributor so soon.

"I came here thinking I wasn't going to play at all. I was just this little guy from Iowa. Not a big name. Nothing. Coach Altman gave me a chance, and I just tried to do the best I could and to play as hard as I could."

Altman knew he had a gamer in Sears even if other coaches didn't. "Coming out of high school, Ryan was really underestimated — probably because he wasn?t very big."

Or demonstrative. His small stature, vanilla game and quiet demeanor let him slip under the recruiting radar. A devout Christian and Dean's List student (he hopes one day to enter the ministry), Sears ascribes his success on the court to God.

"It's all him. Just look at me – I'm not very intimidating. I think I've filled out a little bit, but it doesn't matter, I still get pushed around all the time."

The same cannot be said for Walker, who is that rare combination of an immovable object down on the blocks and an above-the-rim leaper. A prep football star, he was a much sought-after gridiron, not hoops, prospect. Four years later, his ample physical gifts and basketball skills have NBA scouts giving him a look.

Both players established themselves early in their careers. Sears gained the starting point guard spot near the start of his freshman season and has never relinquished it. His sterling play in the clutch, whether clamping down on defense or nailing a three or sinking a crucial free throw (he?s an 82 percent shooter from the line), have made him a go-to guy at crunch time.

Walker emerged as an impact player late in his sophomore year, carrying the Bluejays down the stretch in the regular season and clear through the MVC tournament and two NCAA tourney games.

Last year, each picked up the slack left by the departure of CU all-time scoring leader Rodney Buford. The season produced some defining moments for each.

For Walker, it came in an early road game versus Baylor. "They were kicking our butt at their place," he said. "That's when I put the team on my back and said, 'Hey, let's go for this ride fellas – we're gonna win this game.'"

He led a charge that got the Jays

Dodge Different.

"I wasn't afraid. Coach looked at me and said, 'Do you want it?' And as a leader, I said, 'Yes I do. I want it.'"

Ben Walker comments on missed last shot of first-round NCAA loss to Auburn in 2000.

back within two, with possession and only seconds left. He described what happened next: "I get the ball on the wing. I dribble to the middle, spin off a guy, and put it up off the glass. It goes in. Our team is pumped because we've got another chance. I'm pumped because, wow, I just made that shot, so I might as well make a couple more for us to win the game."

He does, as his 19 points and 15 rebounds lead CU to a 77-76 overtime victory. "After that, the guys were looking for me all the time, even when I didn't want the ball. That game really got me over the hump. It made me grow up and become more of a leader. I was looking forward to making more things happen for our team and taking more shots like that."

Turn next to CU's first-round NCAA tourney matchup with Auburn. After a furious rally in the final half-minute, the Jays are a buzzer-beater away from forcing overtime. It is Ben Walker who launches the team's errant last-gasp shot. "I wasn't afraid. Coach looked at me and said, 'Do you want it?' And as a leader, I said, 'Yes I do. I want it.'"

Sears's coming-of-age began in February with his team slumping at 14-7 after a torrid 9-0 start. Much like Walker did the previous year, he took over the last third of the season. He led the team in scoring, assists and steals the final 13 games as CU righted itself in time to sweep to its second straight MVC tourney title and finish with a school-record tying 23 wins.

Sears, named the league tourney MVP, said his knack for pushing his teammates to greater heights is something he recognizes but doesn't fully understand. "I don't know where it comes from — I just do it. I just try to use the gifts God's given me."

He said the best part of last year's surge was seeing how the team rallied from its mid-season doldrums.

Hundreds of hours of playing together have made Sears and Walker a well-meshed unit that, at its peak, operates in near perfect synch. "The luxury about playing with Ryan for four years," Walker said, "is that we know each other's tendencies. I know if he goes to the hole and drives, he'll kick it out to me. He knows if I drive, I'll kick it to him." About their backcourt partnership, Sears said: "We have a quiet confidence in each other that we're going to get the job done. His strengths compensate my weaknesses and my strengths compensate his weaknesses." nsa

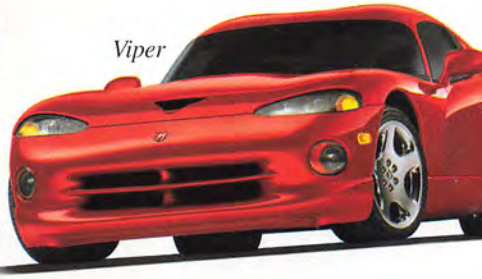
Caravan

Dakota

Avenger

Durango

Neon



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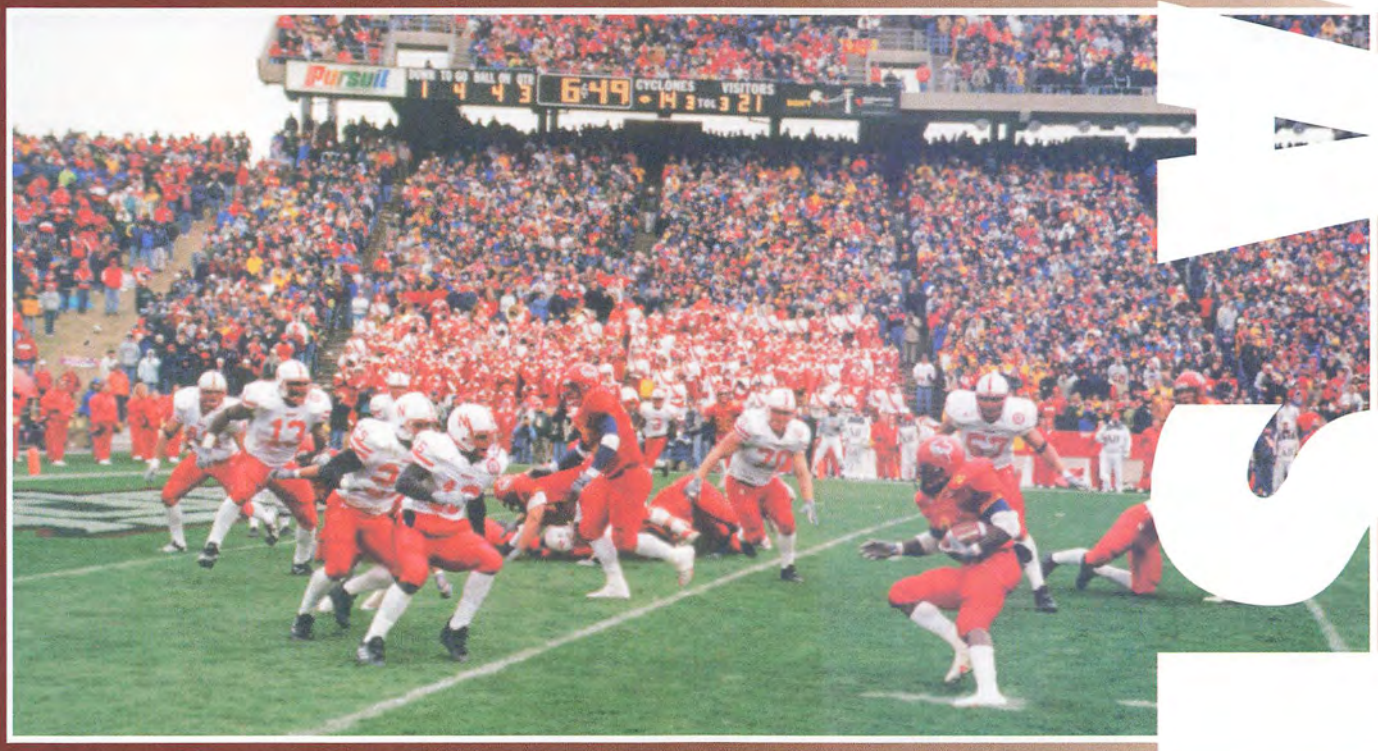
NEBRASKA

Scoreboard

Nebraska	**49**
Iowa State	**27**

Photos by Tony Petersen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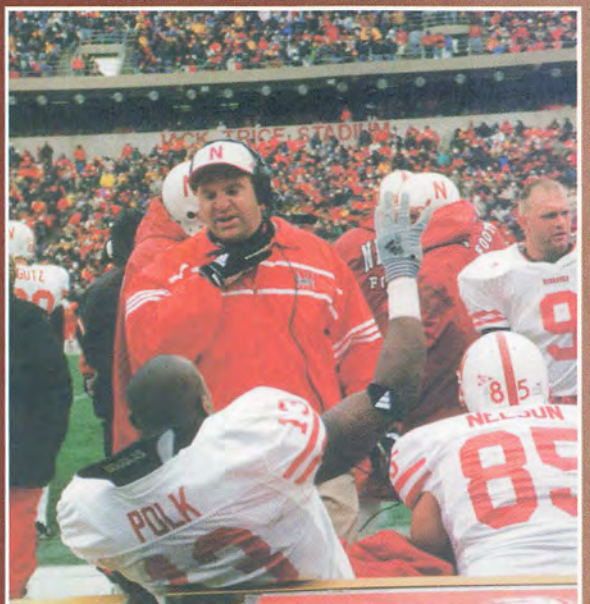
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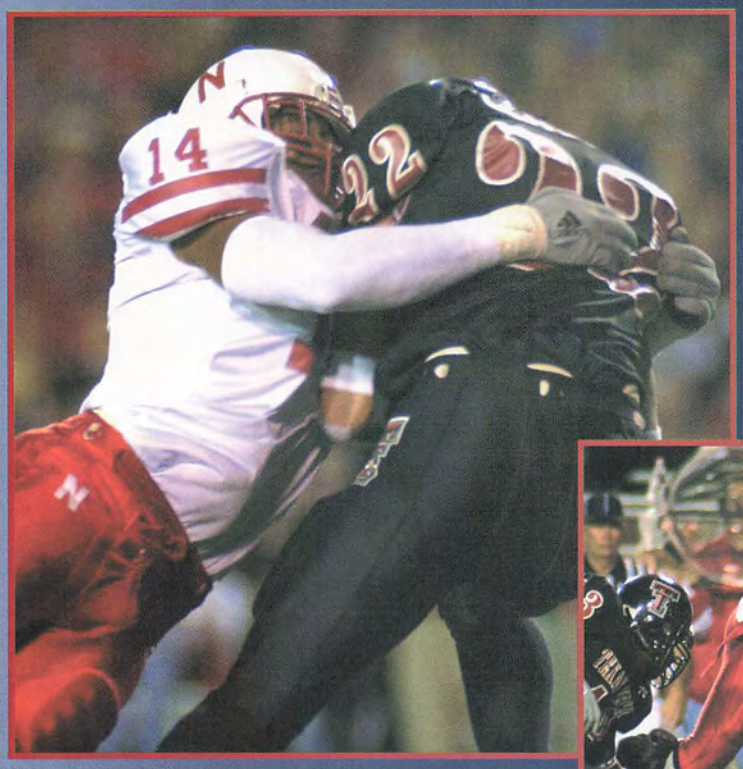
NELSON

NEBRASKA



Scoreboard

Nebraska 56

Texas Tech 3

TEXAS TECH

Angela Timmons

Different, Yet the Same

By Jack Denker

Photos by Creighton Sports Information & Bob Rasmus

Krissie Spanheimer

As the frigid days of November drag on, as the evening temperatures outside the Civic Auditorium in Omaha begin to dip consistently below 30 degrees, and the Creighton basketball players toil endlessly in a sweaty practice gym preparing for their next game, something is quite clear.

The Bluejays stellar backcourt combination of Angela Timmons and Krissie Spanheimer practically begs the wind-chilled brain to produce some Felix-and-Oscar-type comparisons.

They are the odd couple. There's Timmons, a 5-6, left-handed package of tenacity who fills any room she enters, and the 5-8, right-handed Spanheimer, a less-expressive player on the floor who recedes into the background after each game.

Timmons, the Bluejays' starting point guard, is offensive-minded. "I'm hard to guard because I can shoot and drive." She is the team's floor general and vocal leader.

Spanheimer, Creighton's starting shooting guard, is defensive-minded. "I see myself as a better defensive player," Spanheimer said. "The way I look at it is that defense you can control all the time with your effort." She is the team's best defender who leads by example.

"They are two of our best leaders, but in different ways," Creighton Coach Connie Yori said. "Krissie sets an example by the way she goes about doing things, while Angela is much more vocal. She leads through emotion."

Both are classic Missouri Valley Conference guards, but they have different styles to complement their high-octane competitiveness – Timmons is unorthodox, while Spanheimer is fundamental.

"We have really different styles of play," Timmons said. "I am probably a little more aggressive than Krissie, so mine is kind of unorthodox. Krissie is much more sound in the way she plays.

"Everything she does is real fundamental."

Timmons is that rare combination of a point guard with a scorer's mentality. She was an all-Valley first-team selection last year, while leading the Jays in points per game (16.1) and assists (97).

"She is a point guard, who gives up the ball, but she can also score and distribute," Yori said. "Other than Jackie Stiles (the leading scorer in the MVC last year from Southwest Missouri State), I think Angela is the most difficult player in the league to guard off the dribble."

Spanheimer, who Yori calls the "best conditioned athlete that I've ever been associated with," Spanheimer is the catalyst to the squad's full-court press. "She's continuous motion. That's her edge. She will wear you out. She's the only player I've ever told not to move so much. She is tough. She looks like she is 10-years-old, but she has the toughness of a linebacker.

"She's unique that way."

Spanheimer co-led the Jays in steals last season with 40, and is on track to finish in the top 10 in career steals at Creighton.

Angela Timmons and Krissie Spanheimer may have different playing styles, but their focus remains on winning

Although they may possess different personalities and playing styles, Timmons and Spanheimer form a lethal combination on the basketball floor. They have led Creighton to a 44-41 record during the past three years.

They also are regarded, by those close to the program, as shrewd card-playing partners. Timmons and Spanheimer say they regularly team up to whip their teammates at spades, which is a card game the Jays play to pass the time during long bus rides to away games.

"We've been through a lot the last three years," Spanheimer said. "I love playing with Angela. We are both very competitive and we understand each other. I can tell by playing with her what she is going to do next."

Whether it's playing basketball or playing cards, the two 21-year-olds bring a flair that generates excitement and wins. They share a sense of responsibility to themselves, and to their team, that surpasses even their combined career total of 160 starts and 1,642 points.

According to their coach, this dynamic duo may finally be looked upon as the best guard tandem in the conference.

"Krissie and Angela can match up with anyone in our league, and they may be the best two guards in our league when you put them together," Yori said. "Those two get a lot of things done. They are both willing to lay it all on the line to win a basketball game."

Spanheimer, a big-game player who led Omaha Marian to a 44-4 record during her last two years of high school and back-to-back state final appearances, cemented her reputation as a winner at CU with a spectacular 25-point performance against Indiana State during her sophomore year. Spanheimer led the Jays to a 72-63 win on that January 1999 night in a game that was played in her old high school gym.

"Some college players don't like going back and playing games in high school gyms," Spanheimer said. "But I kind of like going back to Marian and playing."

Timmons exhibited her winning ways during an exceptional two-day stretch, last December when the team was decimated by injuries. The Bluejays were down to seven healthy players at the time, so Timmons was called upon to play 79 of the 80 total minutes during road wins over Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Northwestern.

She responded to the challenge by scoring a career-high 31 points and dishing out six assists against Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and followed that up with a 21-point, 11-assist performance against Northwestern. She earned MVC Player of the Week honors for her efforts.

"I felt good about the way I played those two games," Timmons said. "My goal has always been to be a leader on this team. I try to keep everybody on the same page." There will be many more big games for Spanheimer and Timmons this year. nsa

Making a Better Athlete

Dan Barton's work at Omaha Creighton Prep could lead to a new trend among Nebraska high school.

By Jimmy Sheil Photos by Tony Petersen

What do you get when you mix University of Nebraska's strength guru Boyd Epley and fitness freak Richard Simmons?

No, not the energizer bunny with bulging biceps, you silly rabbit. Actually, you get the state of Nebraska's first full-time high school strength and conditioning coordinator. He's professionally certified Dan Barton at Omaha Creighton Prep, whose presence may lead other school districts to follow suit and hire their own strength and conditioning coordinator.

Barton, who has trained under Epley and worked at Oregon State, has the Simmons tag because he not only does strength training with the schools' teams, but also works with all students and staff with health programs.

So does a high school need really need a strength and conditioning coordinator? Husker football legend Jerry Murtaugh, president of the newly established Greater Omaha Athletic League, says yes. The organization's goal is to help put strength and conditioning coordinators in high schools throughout Nebraska.

"Physical education teachers are doing a great job in their classes," Murtaugh said. "But they don't always have the proper education and certification in the field of strength and conditioning that people like Dan have."

GOAL is less than 1 year old, but has the backing of some well-known and influential Nebraskans. Murtaugh has had fund-raising events with other prominent ex-Huskers and the likes of Epley, Director of Athletic Performance, and Nebraska football Coach Frank Solich.

The former All-American linebacker said he only knew of strength coaches in Texas, Florida and California, but he believes the practice will become commonplace in the future.

Locally, Omaha Westside, in the past month, began advertising for a similar position in District 66, said Westside Athletic Director Bob Reznicek.

Finances are a reason for the small number of coordinators across the country, but not the only reason, said Omaha Central Principal Gary Thompson. Considering it's a relatively new position at a time when finances are tighter than ever in

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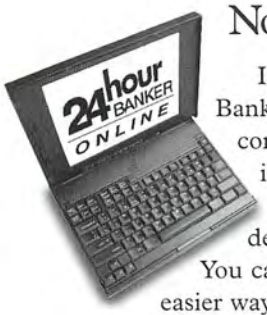

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Making a Better Athlete

school districts throughout the country, the allocation of resources can make it a tough sell to school boards. And some schools are needing to raise salaries to keep current staff members.

But that won't keep the Omaha School District principal from hoping for a strength coordinator to work with his Eagles.

"We sure would like to hire someone with that kind of know-how at Central," Thompson said. "But right now it's a finance issue. I think someone with that expertise is needed because a coach can only do so much besides teaching, organizing and disciplining a team. A personalized program would be good for the different sports, for example swimmers and football players use different muscles."

Creighton Prep Athletic Director Tom Dineen said Prep's athletic department had to flex its muscles by raising the money to hire Barton. Finances were a concern at the private all-boys school, and the position is not yet set in stone, Dineen said.

The Junior Jay athletic department will be responsible for Barton's salary for the first two years and, if the position is deemed viable, the school will take over the salary.

If Barton's work at Prep since August is any indication, the Junior Jay administration which has already benefited directly, will gladly ante up the necessary funds to keep everyone huffing and puffing at Prep.

"So far this year, besides the students, some of the staff is down there and getting on fitness programs," Dineen said. "With the students, I think it is a real benefit having a professional showing the correct lifts and this will cut down on injuries. In the past, a lot of times in the weight room guys have been supervised but not by someone with the knowledge that Dan has. In addition, athletes will be able to rehab injuries safer and faster with the trainer and Dan."

At Prep, a moment showing Barton hasn't ruffled any feathers by taking over another teacher's responsibility occurred as he was explaining that a football coach doesn't have his knowledge and likewise he doesn't have a football coach's expertise. At that moment, longtime Prep football coach and PE teacher Tom Jaworski walked by, and chimed in without missing a step, "That's for sure."

Barton does know a little about playing football having competed at Auburn High School and walking on at Nebraska. A knee injury forced him to sit out at Nebraska and rehabilitate his knee.

It was during this time he formed a relationship with Epley. By the time he was healthy again, however, he was out of Division I eligibility.

With NAIA eligibility left, he was able to play again, at age 26, for Dana College in Blair, Neb. He also earned a degree in education.

After graduation, Barton had a stint at Northwest Missouri State as a graduate assistant before working as a strength and conditioning coach at Oregon State.

Barton incorporated what he learned from his college stops and developed a three-part wellness program, which pertains to an athlete or the geometry teacher. He said his program starts with learning about nutrition, basically choosing between good and bad foods. Next, a student incorporates some cardiovascular exercise for the heart and finally a beginning-level strength training program.

Barton said some athletes can mature into advanced programs and train year-round. Athletes are on two cycles, depending on whether they are in the offseason and trying to add muscle, or during the season and maintenance is the focus.

Barton noted the type of lifts have changed over the years for athletes.

"In lifting for athletics you want to be explosive," Barton said. "And that's where strength training has changed over the years. Look at Nebraska, and all the powerhouse programs. There's no secrets in strength training.

Everyone knows what the other schools are doing. Lifting is going away from slow power-type lifts like the bench press. Instead, you're seeing more explosive lifting actions used in Olympic-type lifts, for example hang cleans, power cleans and push jerks."

Barton already had made a fan out of at least one standout Prep athlete. "Mr. Barton has helped me focus on a college lifting program," college football prospect Titus Adams said. "I wish he had been here since I was a freshman because he is so knowledgeable and gets the most out of me in workouts."

Working with individual athletes such as Adams is an important part of Barton's job, as well as working with teams.

"We feel, it's not a life-and-death thing, but athletes need someone to work with and lead in the right direction to enhance their chance of playing college sports," Barton said. "For example, I have been supervising the basketball team since August running four times a week and lifting three times a week, similar to a college team. Some kids want to play sports in college, I am preparing them to step in and play right away, maybe being able to skip that redshirt year, by building muscle now and lifting properly."

Nebraska's Epley supports the idea of high school strength coordinators.

"Universities are going to get better developed athletes in terms of physique and especially in terms of knowledge," said Epley, who was recently named by a national publication as one of the Top 100 Most Important College Football Sports Figures of the Century. "It will definitely raise the bar in high school athletics and cut down on injuries at both levels.

"In the future, you will have healthier kids, less injury and better performance from having these coaches in the high school area. So you are only going to see more strength positions opening up." nsa

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November

November 3, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Sioux City***
November 4, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Ceder Rapids***
November 10, Friday	7:05PM	at Tri-City
November 12, Sunday	***6:05PM***	***Tri-City***
November 17, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Green Bay***
November 18, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Lincoln***
November 22, Wednesday	7:05PM	at Tri-City
November 24, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Dubuque***
November 25, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Des Moines***

December

December 1, Friday	7:05PM	at Tri-City
December 2, Saturday	7:05PM	at Sioux City
December 3, Sunday	6:05PM	at Des Moines
December 8, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Rochester***
December 9, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Des Moines***
December 15, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Waterloo***
December 16, Saturday	7:05PM	at Sioux City
December 29, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Waterloo***
December 30, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Dubuque***

January

January 5, Friday	***7:05PM***	***USA USHL***
January 6, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Lincoln***
January 12, Friday	7:05PM	at Waterloo
January 13, Saturday	7:05PM	at Chicago
January 16, Tuesday	***7:05PM***	***Tri-City***
January 19, Friday	7:05PM	at Waterloo
January 20, Saturday	7:05PM	at Dubuque
January 26, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Sioux City***
January 27, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Chicago***
January 30, Tuesday	***7:05PM***	***Sioux Falls***

February

February 2, Friday	7:05PM	at Sioux City
February 3, Saturday	7:05PM	at Lincoln
February 9, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Rochester***
February 10, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Tri-City***
February 16, Friday	7:05PM	at USA USHL (Exhibition)
February 17, Saturday	7:05PM	at USA USHL (Exhibition)
February 22, Thursday	7:05PM	at Sioux Falls
February 23, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Ceder Rapids***
February 24, Saturday	7:05PM	at Ceder Rapids
February 28, Wednesday	7:05PM	at Sioux Falls

March

March 2, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Chicago***
March 4, Sunday	***6:05PM***	***Des Moines***
March 9, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Sioux City***
March 10, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Sioux Falls***
March 16, Friday	***7:05PM***	***USA USHL***
March 17, Saturday	***7:05PM***	***Green Bay***
March 18, Sunday	7:35PM	at Des Moines
March 23, Friday	***7:05PM***	***Lincoln***
March 24, Saturday	7:05PM	at Lincoln

* Home games highlighted in Bold and Italics

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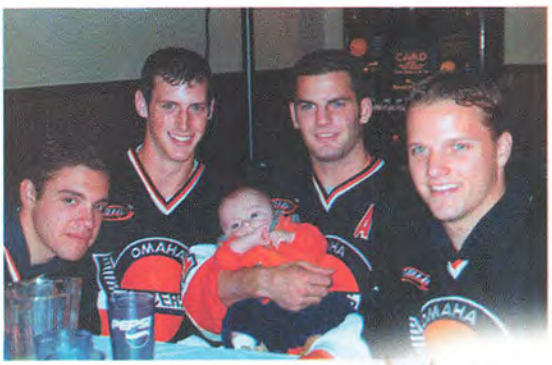
Check Nebraska Sports Magazine's website for more upcoming events!!!



Left:
Dylan Cochrane

Right:
Casey Siwa

Rich Gyhra was the winner of the autographed hockey stick;
Mike Bishop was the winner of the Lancer cap.

Nebraskans in the 2000 Olympics

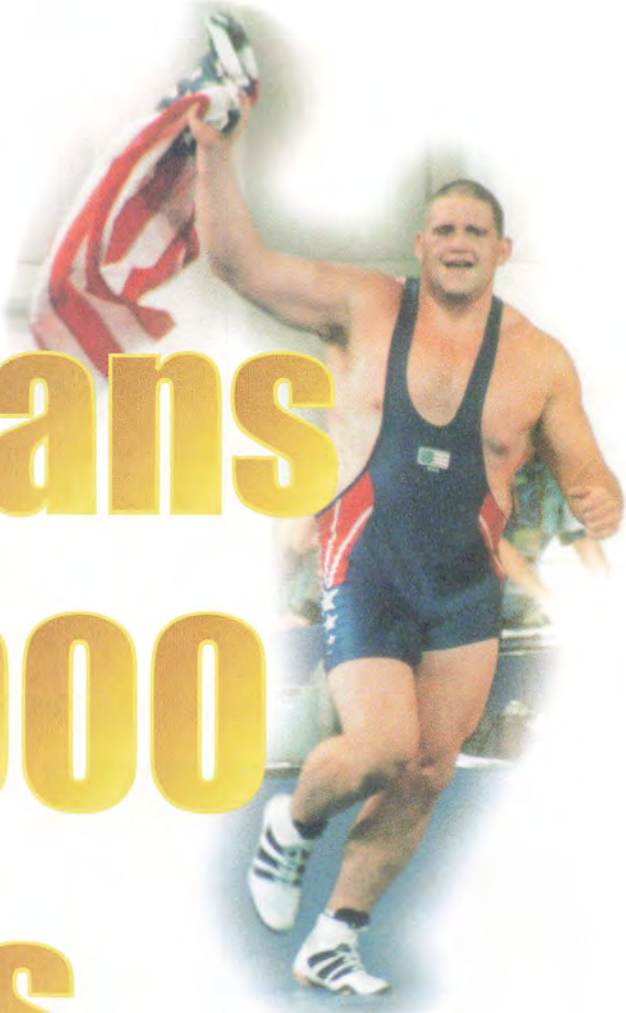


Photo by Sonja Stanbro

By Jimmy Sheil & Kathryn Trim

We're sure that you've heard about how Rulon Gardner toppled a Russian monument, but did you know that Husker swimmer Therese Alshammar missed striking gold by .19 of a second?

ALLSPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

Mens 50m Butterfly winners Adam Pine, Geoff Huegill, Burt Reid

ALLSPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

Do you know how your favorite Nebraskans faired in Sydney?

PHOTO BY UNL-SID

Therese Alshammar, Sweden, swimmer (UNL 1997-99) Alshammer won two individual silver medals and one bronze medal in a relay. She won a silver medal in the 50-meter freestyle, finishing in 24.51 seconds, losing by .19 seconds to Inge De Bruijn of the Netherlands. The Swede again came up short for gold in the 100-meter relay by .06. Alshammer also snared a bronze medal as a member of Sweden's 4x100-meter relay. Her three Olympic medals tie her with Penny Heyns for the most Olympic medals won by a former Husker in one Olympiad. In two days in 1999 at the European Short Course Championships, she broke three world records. The records were set in the 50-meter freestyle, 100-meter freestyle and the 200-meter freestyle relay.

PHOTO BY UNL-SID

Adam Pine, Australia, swimmer (UNL 1996-00) Pine won a gold and silver as a member of the Australian relays. He earned the gold in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay. In addition, he won a silver medal in the 400-meter medley relay, as he was listed as an alternate. Pine swam the third leg of the preliminaries, but the Ballina, Australia, native did not swim in the final. At UNL in 2000, Pine became the first Husker male to win an individual NCAA title in the 100-meter butterfly with a school record time of 51.23. For his career, he earned 19 All-American awards and four Big 12 titles.

ALLSPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

Penny Heyns, South Africa, swimmer (UNL 1993-96) The two-time gold medal winner added a bronze medal to her collection in her third Olympic Games. She won the bronze in the 100-meter with a time of 1:07.55. She is the current Olympic and world record holder in the event. Heynes also entered the 200-meter breaststroke finishing 20th overall. Heyns won gold medals in the 200-meter breaststroke and the 100-meter breaststroke in 1996 in Atlanta. Heyns was the first South African to win a gold medal since 1952 with her victory in Atlanta.

PHOTO BY USOC

Allison Weston, USA, volleyball (Papillion High School, UNL 1992-1995) Papillion High School alum and former Husker All-American Allison Weston captained Team USA to a fourth-place finish at the Games. The fight for the bronze was tight, with Brazil defeating the U.S., 25-18, 25-22 and 25-21. However, most Nebraskans probably remember her from when she led the Cornhuskers to a 63-2 record in her final two seasons, including their first ever national championship in 1995. Weston finished her collegiate career as the only three-time, first-team AVCA All-American in Husker history. She also was the first ever Morgan Trophy Award winner, given annually to the nation's top collegiate volleyball player. It was this kind of skill and award-winning attitude that helped Team USA qualify for the Olympics, with Weston recording 25 kills, 22 digs and four blocks at the NIKE Americas' Volleyball challenge.

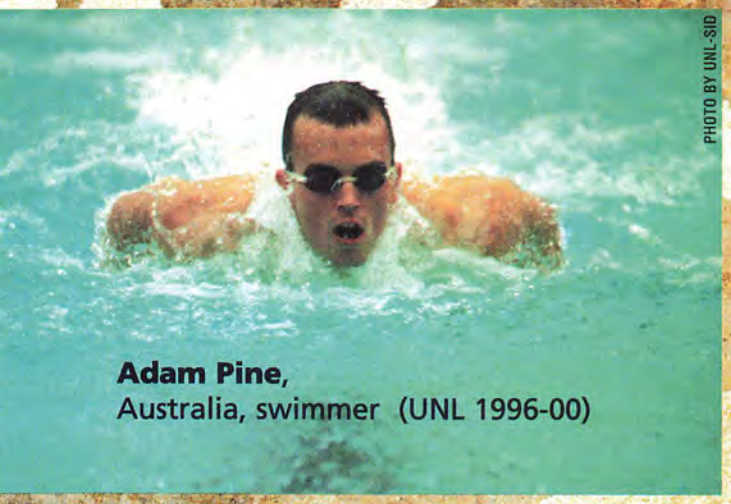


PHOTO BY UNL-SID

Adam Pine,
Australia, swimmer (UNL 1996-00)

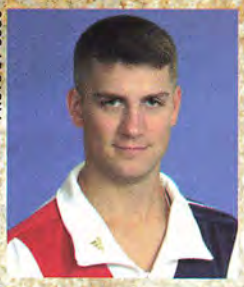


PHOTO BY USOC

Jason Parker Shooting, USA (Bryan High School Alum) Sgt. Jason Parker finished fifth in the Olympic 10-meter air rifle match with a score of 693.1 points—merely three points away from the Chinese shooter who took home the gold with a score a 696.4. Back in the States, Parker has won the US National Air Rifle Championship for the past two years. While in Europe, he set two world records at the 1998 Munich World Cup, captured a gold at the Buenos Aires World Cup and a silver at the Milan. Parker graduated from Bryan High School in Omaha, Neb. where he was born and raised. When not globetrotting, 26-year-old Parker serves as a sergeant of the Army Marksmanship Unit in Fort Benning, Ga.

PHOTO BY UNL-SID

Helene Muller, South Africa, swimmer (UNL 1997-present) Muller competed in four events for South Africa. She anchored a fifth-place finish in the 4x100 meter relay that finished in 4:05.15. In the 200-meter freestyle, she finished fifth with a time of 2:00.04, missing qualifying by .07. The physical therapy major also was in the 50-meter freestyle with a time of 25:06. In the 1996 Atlanta Games, she swam in the fourth-place 400-meter relay, and was also the South African national champion in the 100-meter freestyle that year.

PHOTO BY UNL-SID

Valery Kalmikovs, Latvia, swimmer (UNL 1996-00) Kalmikovs competed in three events at the Sydney Games. The ex-Husker finished 34th overall in the 100-meter breastroke with a time of 1:04.02. He touched the wall in the 200-meter breaststroke with a time of 2:16.21 placing him 19th. In the 200-meter individual medley he came in 24th with a time of 2:04. He finished his Nebraska career at the NCAA Championships with a sixth-place finish in the 200-meter breaststroke in 2000. Kalmikovs earned seven All-America awards while at Nebraska.

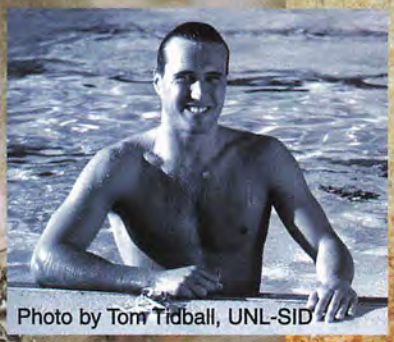


Photo by Tom Tidball, UNL-SID

Juan Benavides, Spain, swimmer, (UNL 1994-97)- Benavides was part of the 4x100 meter relay that finished 15th overall and fourth in its heat. The Spaniard also swam at the Atlanta Games in 1996 with the Spanish national team. In Atlanta, Benavides was in the sprint freestyle events for the Spanish team, and finished 30th in the 50-meter freestyle and 33rd in the 100-meter freestyle. While at Nebraska, Benavides became only the third, and last swimmer in Big 8/Big 12 history to sweep the 50-, 100- and 200-yard freestyle events when he accomplished the feat in 1996.

Javier Botello, Spain, swimmer (UNL 1997-present) Botello competed in three events at the Summer Games. In the 100-meter freestyle he was fourth in his heat and 28th overall with a time of 50.87. Botello was part of two relays, finishing 15th overall with a time of 3:42.76 in the 4x100 meter medley and was part of a relay that came in 15th overall again with a time of 3:22.76 in the 4x100 meter freestyle. He is a five-time All-American swimmer at Nebraska.

AUSTRIAN SWIMMING FEDERATION

Elvira Fischer, Swimming, Austria, (UNL, 1999 to Present) This was the second time UNL sophomore Elvira Fischer has competed in the Olympics for her homeland Austria. At the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, she placed 23rd in the 200-meter breaststroke. In Sydney, Fischer was first in heat, finishing 24th overall with a time of 1:11.58 for the 100-meter breaststroke, and was eighth in heat, finishing 19th overall with a score of 2:30.5 for the 200-meter breaststroke. At UNL, Fischer also has captured the All-American award with a 10th-place finish in the 200-meter breaststroke.

AUSTRIAN SWIMMING FEDERATION

Michael Windisch, Austria, swimmer (UNL 1996-00) Windisch took part in three events in Australia. His best showing came in the 400-meter individual medley finishing 26th with a time of 4:24.62. He finished one place lower at 27th in the 200-meter individual medley clocking in at 2:05.15. He also finished 28th overall in the 200-meter butterfly with a time of 0f 2:01.20. Windisch capped a Husker career with a fourth-place finish at the NCAA Championships in the 400-meter breaststroke and a sixth-place finish in the 400-meter freestyle. He earned six All-American awards at Nebraska.

UNL-SID

Jelena Stanisavljevic, Yugoslavia, track and field (UNL 1999 to Present) The sophomore ran in one relay event in the 2000 Summer Games. The Arandjelovac, Yugoslavia native team did not make the finals and finished round one in 3.37.99. The sociology major was a member of Nebraska's All-American team that finished sixth at the NCAA Indoor Championships and she was part of the 1998 Yugoslavia world juniors team.

Fab Four Freshmen

AUSTRIAN SWIMMING FEFERATION

Marion Reiff, Austria

Four incoming freshman, one Austrian, one Australian, and two Romanians, swam for Nebraska at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney and will join the Huskers in January.

Austrian Marion Reiff just missed medalling by finishing fourth in the 10-meter platform. Australian Anna Windsor took home eighth in her heat in the 200-meter medley (2:19.44) and she was 25th overall.

Razvan Florea, a Romanian, took sixth in the 200-meter backstroke. Florea touched the wall in 1:59.05. Fellow Romanian Stephan Gherghel placed seventh in his heat and 21st overall in the 100-meter butterfly. Gherghel's time of 54.13 was just four-tenth's of a second out of qualifying for the semis.

Coaches

AUSTRIAN SWIMMING FEFERATION

Paul Nelson, Austria swim coach

Nebraska swimming coaches **Paul Nelsen** and **Rick Paine** were part of the Austrian team at the Sydney games in September and they worked with UNL swimmers before returning to an uncertain future at UNL. Recent school investigations into suspended men's and women's head coach Cal Bentz's program has jumbled things to an extent. Currently, Nelsen is the interim head coach and Paine was suspended.

Interim head coach Nelsen worked with coached UNL's Elvira Fischer in the 2000 Olympic Games and she finished 24th in the 100-meter backstroke and 19th in the 200-meter breaststroke. Nelsen has been a coach at Nebraska since 1996 and his main coaching area is the breaststroke and individual medley group. The Lincoln Southeast graduate was a four-time All-American swimmer at the University of Minnesota from 1990-93.

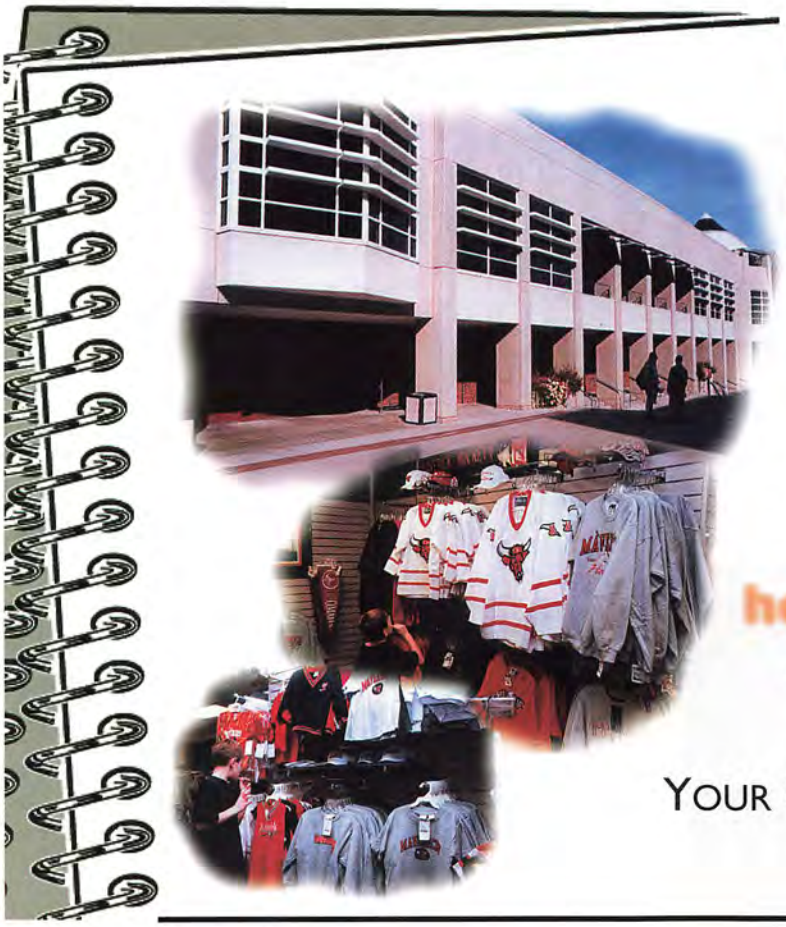
In the Olympics, Paine coached UNL swimmer Michael Windisch who finished 27th in the 200-meter individual medley, 28th in the 200-meter butterfly and 26th in the 400-meter individual medley. Paine has been with Nebraska for 16 years and works with the individual medley, middle distance freestyle, butterfly and backstroke swimmers.

AUSTRIAN SWIMMING FEFERATION

Rick Paine, Austria swim coach

Peggy Liddick, Gymnastics, Australia, Former UNL Coach

A former UNL gymnastics coach, Peggy Liddick recently led her Australian gymnastic team to a seventh-place finish in Sydney. Although she said that having the home crowd offered no technical advantage, she added that it provided a great psychological boost. It was probably similar to the boost Liddick had while coaching the two-time Gold Medallist Shannon Miller of the American team at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.



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5. Which former Husker star fullback transferred from the University of Nebraska at Omaha?
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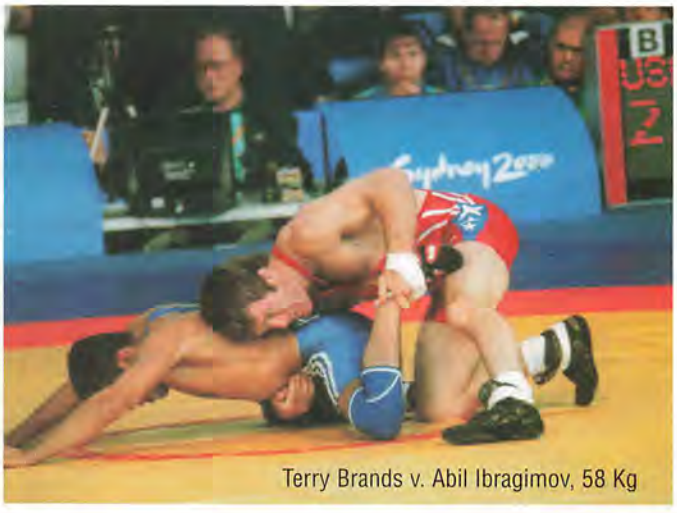
Yankee Doodle Dandies

By Michael J. Carnes
Photos by Sonja Stanbro



Terry Brands v. Abil Ibragimov, 58 Kg

Talk about a media darling.

Since he returned with a gold medal in tow, former Nebraska wrestler Rulon Gardner quickly has become the hottest property on the TV talk show circuit.

Gardner's win over Olympic legend Alexander Karelin immediately made him one of the Olympics' biggest stars. He was chosen by the American delegation of athletes to carry the nation's flag during the closing ceremonies.

That was the start of what seemed to be a nonstop media circus for Gardner, who made guest appearances on "The Tonight Show," "Late Show With David Letterman," "Late Night With Conan O'Brien" and "The Rosie O'Donnell Show." He also competed for himself and his favorite charity on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?"

"I've just been everywhere," Gardner said during a stop in New York City. "It's been a nonstop roller-coaster ride going from this talk show to that and hitting every market out there. It's nice to be somewhat famous, but it's just crazy."

Gardner is one of three medal-earning Olympic wrestlers with Nebraska ties. Former University of Nebraska-Lincoln wrestling standout Matt Lindland and current UNL assistant coach Terry Brands joined Gardner in donning the Red, White and Blue while representing the United States in Olympic wrestling competition.

All three were not considered strong contenders for a medal when the games started. But of the three, there is no question that Gardner was the biggest surprise of these Olympic Games.

Gardner visited Jay Leno on "The Tonight Show" and received a special surprise when his hometown greeted him with a surprise live video shot from the school's gymnasium. The event brought tears to the eyes of the 286-pound American hero.

Following that was a guest appearance on "Late Show with David Letterman," where Gardner presented the popular Top 10 List. That night's topic? "Top 10 cool things about winning a gold medal."

Gardner eventually returned to his hometown in Afton, Wyo., where he was greeted with a hero's welcome. Still, the fact that he beat a wrestling legend and won an Olympic gold medal hasn't fully hit him yet.

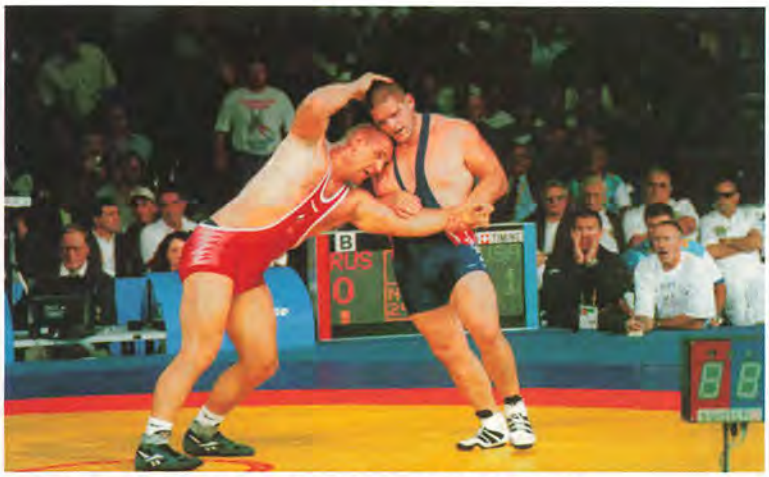
"It's kind of a daily thing where I wake up and go, 'Hey, I won this,'" he said. "I'm sure it's going to hit me at some point, but when they're throwing all these things at you it's hard to relax and think about it."

Gardner's victory, a 1-0 decision, marked the first time in 13 years that any wrestler in the world had defeated Karelin, who was trying for an unprecedented fourth Olympic gold medal in Greco-Roman wrestling. It was also the first time in 10 years anyone had even scored on the legendary Russian.

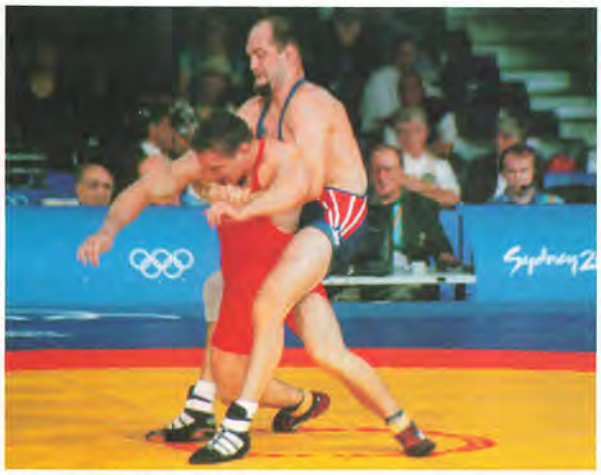
"It's kind of a David and Goliath story," Gardner said. "When you go to bed at night, you dream you'll do this and beat him like 5-0, and you always think of stuff like that. But you never actually think you'll beat Karelin this way.

"You always have to dream of winning, because if you don't expand yourself in your knowledge you won't strive to do your best."

Their stories may not be as well-known, but Lindland and Brands also achieved their share of success. Lindland, who had to go courts to earn a spot on the Olympic team, picked up a silver medal in 76-kilogram weight class in



Alexander Kareline (Russia) v. Rulon Gardner(USA) 130 Kg



Matt Lindland (USA) 76 Kg

Greco-Roman competition, while Brands – the twin brother of 1996 Olympic gold medalist Tom Brands – finished with a bronze medal in freestyle competition.

Lindland, the 1993 Big Eight champion, was involved in easily the most controversial story of the days heading up to the Olympics as he pursued legal intervention to be put on the Olympic team.

"In looking back, the only thing I can say is that I thank God that He put me through that because I was able to go through something like that and be stronger for it," Lindland said. "It was a test of my faith, and it helped me grow not only as an athlete and a wrestler, but it helped me grow in my faith, too."

Lindland wrestled in the finals of the U.S. Olympic Trials in Dallas last spring, attempting to qualify in the 76-kg (167.5-lb.) division. After winning the 2000 U.S. Nationals, Lindland was in good position to reach the Olympics, needing only to beat Keith Sieracki in the Olympic finals.

In the final match of their best-of-three series, Lindland and Sieracki battled through nine minutes of action. Sieracki won the match, 2-1, on a referee's decision, although neither wrestler was called for passivity in the last five minutes of the match.

The result didn't sit well with Lindland. But it was the officiating that really bothered him.

"I've never been on a match where I was on my feet for almost eight minutes like that, and the last five minutes there was not one passivity call made," Lindland said. "And then the one scoring action that was made they missed. To score the match wrong like that was just uncalled for.

"Everybody gets bad calls, but it was handled so wrongly that it looked like there was a conspiracy," he added.

In the end, Lindland's pre-Olympic adventure would involve USA Wrestling, the United States Olympic Committee and the U.S. court system.

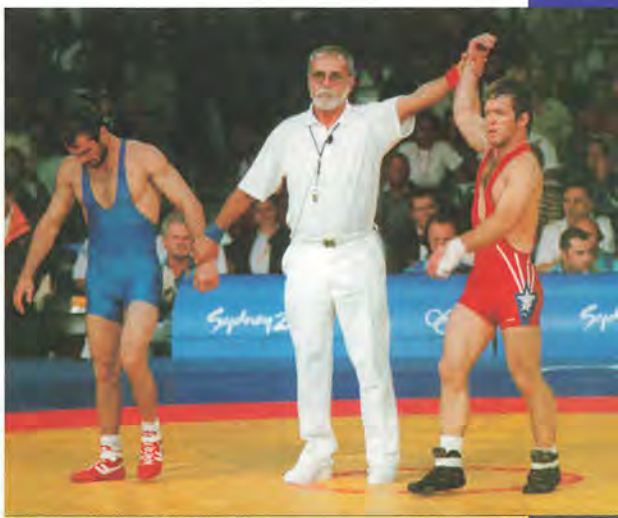
"The courts eventually ruled that I followed correct procedures and that the second arbitration should've never taken place, and the courts ordered USA Wrestling to put me on the Olympic team," Lindland said.

But it wasn't over there. Eventually, the USOC put Lindland on the team, but then several days later called Lindland and told him Sieracki was their man.

Ultimately, the federal courts ordered the USOC and USA Wrestling to put Lindland on the team.

There were those in the wrestling community, though, who felt Lindland's legal maneuverings gave the sport a black eye.

"The people that criticized me, I don't know if any of them has ever been at that level, so I don't know if they ever committed themselves to something," Lindland said. "The level of commitment I put in these last eight years … for people to criticize me and do it anonymously in the e-mails that were sent to me and things posted on Internet bulleting boards, I think it was really inappropriate, especially if you don't have the (courage) to put your name behind it."



Terry Brands (USA) v. Damir Zakhartdinov (UZB) 58 Kg
Brands takes Bronze Medal in competition.

Once he got to Sydney, Lindland focused on the business at hand, but few gave the UNL standout a chance to find his way to the medal stand.

Lindland breezed through all three matches in his pool round to automatically qualify for the semifinals. By going 3-0 in his pool, he guaranteed himself a shot at no worse than fourth place.

But Lindland assured himself of an Olympic medal by

Matt Lindland (USA) v. Kader Slila (ALG) 76 Kg

winning his semifinal match, dominating David Manukyan of Ukraine, 7-4, to reach the finals.

Lindland's hopes for a gold medal came to an end when Mourat Kardanov of Russia posted a 3-0 win. But while he wasn't expected to come home with any medal, Lindland still felt the disappointment of not reaching the summit.

"I made a couple of mistakes in that last match, but I had a good tournament," he said. "I went there with the intention of getting the gold medal, so I wasn't surprised I made the finals. I would've been more disappointed if I hadn't been in the finals."

Brands, who recently joined the University of Nebraska-Lincoln coaching staff as an assistant to Mark Manning, had some unfinished business before he could devote his full attention to being a Husker coach.

Brands was suffering the lingering effects of a series of wrestling-related injuries. But there was that nagging feeling that he could better his second-place finish at the 1996 Olympic trials.

He was hoping to join twin brother, Tom Brands, on the U.S. Olympic team that year. In fact, the whole state of Iowa was counting on the Brands brothers bringing gold back to the Hawkeye state.

They brought home gold medals from the World Championships in 1993, marking the first time brothers from the United States earned gold medals from Worlds in the same year.

But something happened along the way. Terry was defeated in the finals of the 1996 Olympic trials and had to stay home while his twin brother won the gold medal in Atlanta.

"It was just a nagging thought in my head that I needed to do this and take care of some long-range goals," Brands said. "I knew that if I didn't do it now, there's no way I'd be able to do it in 2004."

The work paid off, as Brands defeated Kerry Boumans of Colorado Springs, Colo., in a pair of tough overtime matches to qualify for the Olympics. But Brands, a three-time NCAA finalist and two-time champion at Iowa, knew his work toward the medal stand was just beginning.

Brands wrestled well in his pool-round matches. He advanced to the quarterfinals after winning his pool, and continued his streak early in his quarterfinal match against David Pogosian of Georgia. Brands had lost to the Georgian in their last meeting three years ago, but Brands was not about to allow history to repeat itself as he advanced to the semifinals.

But the hopes of matching his twin brother's Olympic pinnacle were denied in the semifinals, as he lost a controversial 6-5 decision to Ali Reza Dabir of Iran, the 1998 World Champion.

Brands came back to defeat Damir Zakhardtinov of Uzbekistan, 3-2, to claim the bronze medal, a bittersweet finish for the Sheldon, Iowa, native.

While Brands isn't ruling out the possibility of competing in the World Championship next year in New York City, his focus now is on helping to turn Nebraska's program from a team on the cusp of a national title to a national championship team. nsa

Rulon Gardner takes victory lap.

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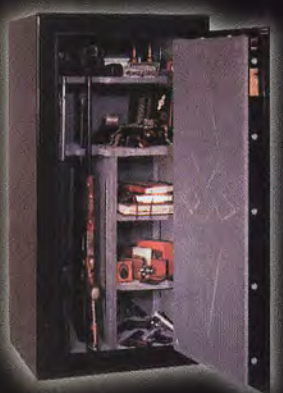

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Wheels of Fury

USOC

by Michael Watkins

As the gun fired to signal the start of the race, Cheri Becerra took off like a bullet into the Sydney night.

The favorite because of her time a month earlier at a qualifying meet in Switzerland, Becerra already envisioned the Olympic gold medal around her neck as she extended her lead around the first turn in the early stretch of the women's 800-meter wheelchair race.

Then, something quite unexpected happened.

"I stopped, slowed down, really, to run close behind the leader and coast a little while off her tailwind and then make my sprint down the final 100 meters to the finish line," Becerra said. "I knew I could stay close by riding the leader's back, but I couldn't have anticipated what happened next."

Two other racers, jockeying for position behind the leader, caught Becerra on the outside lane and trapped her on the inside — preventing her from making her outside move.

"My strength is my sprinting, but when you're caught inside, it doesn't matter how good of a sprinter you are," said Becerra, who lives and trains in Nebraska City. "I made a mental mistake, but I've done the same thing in many other races and have always been able to make a move at the end.

"There wasn't a doubt in anyone's mind – mine in particular – that I wasn't coming home without a medal. I would have never expected the Japanese and Mexican racers to come up on the outside, mostly because they were the last two qualifiers with the slowest times."

Becerra finished fifth, more than a second behind Olympic champion Louise Sauvage of Australia — who also beat Becerra (she won the bronze) for the gold in the same event at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

"The thing is, if I don't get caught on the inside, I'm lighter (weight-wise) and can beat her (Sauvage) in a sprint," Becerra said. "I just didn't get my chance. It was a bad time to have a bad race. It was one of the most disappointing, devastating events in my life."

But Becerra, who's been paralyzed from the waist down since the age of 4 due to an unknown virus – "I went to take a nap, and when I woke up, I couldn't walk" – has never been one to let disappointment prevent her from reaching her goals.

Along with her Olympic bronze, she holds the world records in the 100-, 200- and 400-meter wheelchair sprints, and competes several times throughout the year in 10K and 15K road races throughout the United States.

Following the Atlanta Olympics, Becerra returned a month later to win two silvers and two bronze medals at the 1996 Paralympics.

Becerra returned to Sydney in late October to compete in the 2000 Paralympics. She went determined to win and with no regrets.

"I'm going to leave it all on the track, so to speak," Becerra said before returning to Australia. "I didn't run a smart race during the Olympics, but this time I am going for it. I won't settle for anything short of new world records in all my sprint events and, finally, a gold medal."

Becerra, just 24, is four years away from reaching her prime age for wheelchair racing. "The older you get, the more powerful and smarter you get through experience." She now is gearing toward an Olympic rematch in Athens, Greece, in 2004.

"I know I can beat these women; I've done it before," Becerra said. "Now, I just need to go out and prove it on a world stage like the Olympics." nsa

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Timeless Wonder

Competing in her 6th Olympics, Merlene Ottey captures one more medal

By Kathryn Trim

By age 40, most athletes are already long past their glory days and most likely have moved on to a life of spectator sports and a diet consisting primarily of donuts and coffee. But, not this one.

Merlene Ottey, former UNL sprinter and Nebraska's most decorated track and field athlete, is still running strong. At her sixth Olympic competition, Ottey captured her eighth Olympic medal while running the last leg of a 4x100-meter relay. With her help, the Jamaican team came in second, winning the silver with a time of 42.13.

Ottey came close to winning a bronze in the 100-meter dash, where her teammate Tanya Lawrence took third place by a nose, beating Ottey by just 0.01 seconds.

But these are just the most recent in her long list of accomplishments. Ottey has competed since she was 14 years old and in that time has won close to 40 medals in international competitions, including three silver and five bronze Olympic medals. She was also named to the *Track &Field News* Women's All-Century team and was selected as the women's athlete of the decade in the 200 meters.

"I've lasted this long because I like to do what I do and I believe in myself. I like to fight. When people write me off, I like to go out there and take up the challenge to show them that I'm still good, "Ottey told one reporter from the publication, *The Express*.

During her years at UNL, she definitely put up at fight, earning 14 national individual titles, 24 All-America awards and 28 Big Eight titles. She still holds the fastest times in the school history in the 55 meters (6.70), 60 meters (7.24), and 200 meters (22.79) indoors, and the 100 meters (11.03), and 200 meters (22.17) outdoors. Ottey also anchored the 4x100-meter relay team that placed second at the 1983 NCAA Outdoor Championships, and recorded the fastest time in the school history (43.44).

Although she loves the challenge of her sport, eight medals and six times at the Olympics must be enough for her. According to *The Express*, after 26 years of running, Ottey has decided that it's time to bring her athletic career to a halt.

"Most likely this is the end. After the games I'll sit down and think about it and if I get something better to do in the next few months, I'll move on for sure." Ottey told *The Express*.

"Twenty six years around athletics is enough. I don't want to spend my whole life in it. I want another challenge. " she said.

As for the 2004 Olympics in Athens, she said, "I'll be there only if there is a straight final. Let's put it this way, at 44 I'll be dead after two rounds."

So what do you do after you've spent your whole life running, and what could be more challenging than pushing your body to the limit and breaking some of the world's fastest records?

According to *The Express*, it's fashion. Ottey ruled out any desire to stay in sports as a coach and said that when she retires, she plans to pursue a career in high fashion. So watch the stores for the new line of Merlene Ottey ultra high-fashion, haute couture running shoes. nsa

ALLSPORT PHOTOGRAPHY

The Time of His Life

UNL-SID

By Jimmy Sheil

University of Nebraska and Columbian Olympic sprinter Jimmy Pino may not have won a gold medal at the Summer Games in Australia, but he didn't get shortchanged in the vibrant city of Sydney.

"After my competition, some nights I was dancing at the clubs till three or four in the morning," the junior sprinter from Bogotá, Colombia, said. "But I never made it to the close of the clubs at 6 in the morning.

UNL-SID

"You have to go out and experience the Olympics because they are so special. You want to savor it and enjoy because it is a great experience with so many different people."

Prior to shaking his "thang," the 1999 Colombian 100-meter national champion entered the 200 meters finishing sixth in his heat and 54th overall with a time of 21.42. The 21-year-old was satisfied in his time for his first Olympics, but thought there was room for improvement. Pino said his pre-Olympic times were good enough for Colombia to enter him in the 100 meters, but with the likes of U.S. superstar Mo Greene, he and his coach agreed to save himself for the 200 meters.

Just being at the Games was reason enough to celebrate for Pino, who found himself orphaned by his track program at Armstrong Atlantic State in Savannah, Ga., in the fall of 1999 as a sophomore. But he was armed with e-mail, and a plan when the program went belly up.

"I was not going to go just anywhere, I needed a balance," the computor science major said. "I was not going to go to Arkansas where they are No. 1 in track and low on the education or Harvard where they have the education and not the track program. So I chose Nebraska because it is a good mix of education and track."

Pino sent an e-mail to Nebraska's track and field recruitment coordinator, Matt Martin, and a visit was arranged in October 1999. The Colombian said he was impressed with the overall environment at the Lincoln campus and enrolled in January.

Through his few months at Nebraska, Pino's main concern was staying healthy after a series of injuries at Armstrong State — the Olympics were not a priority. When he thought about the Olympics prior to the Games, he would sigh and think, "OK, I'm going to watch the Olympics on TV, again."

As Pino stayed healthy, he began to lower his times and move up on the team's depth charts. Pino had a breakthrough at the Big 12 Championships in May with third-place finishes in both the 100 and 200 meters in times of 10.47 and 20.87.

Not only were Big 12 rivals taking note of the Husker newcomer, but Colombian officials also took notice of Pino's career best times and inquired about the possibility of going to Sydney. After going back to Colombia in the summer to show he wasn't out of shape, he was ticketed for the Summer Games on the Colombian national team.

Curiously, Pino met some other NU athletes for the first time in Sydney as he had a chance meeting with NU Olympians, swimmers Latvian Valery Kalmikovs and Michael Windisch of Austria in the Olympic Village.

Pino said the experience of being an Olympian was almost overwhelming, even at the sound of the gun for his race.

"I raced at 10 in the morning and thought the stands would be half-filled," Pino said. "But it was packed and they were loud. And it was like 'I love the Olympics.'"

Pino said hopes to love the 2004 Summer Games in Athens, and predicted he would "make the 200 finals."

In the coming years, he hopes to continue to compete nationally for Nebraska, internationally for Colombia and possibly try the European Grand Prix Track circuit after graduation.

Predictably Pino, like every athlete who didn't test positive for a banned substance, said what he would remember most about the Olympics were the opening ceremonies.

"In the stadium there were 110,000 people cheering," Pino said. "And you come marching in during the opening ceremonies with your country and all of the other athletes. And it was like, 'Yeah this is the Olympics.'"

Also, in that opening ceremonies were the much-publicized prominent professional athletes, and Pino had mixed emotions about many of the pros whose bodyguards shooed anyone away who got too close. And many of those athletes didn't stay in the Olympic Village and become part of the Olympic experience for all the athletes. He thought it was unfortunate they were such a focal point of the media but understood their presence helped the Games.

Another much-talked about Olympic tradition was the varied food court with selections from all over the country. The Bogotá native said he tried some "black stuff, they called Australian peanut butter, vegamite" on a cracker, but it was so foreign tasting that he did not finish it.

Instead, the Colombian stuck to his Americanized taste buds.

"I ate McDonald's a lot of the times at the Olympic Village," Pino said. "And I had apple pie after my meal." nsa

The Boys of Summer

Strike Gold

COURTESY KANSAS CITY ROYALS

COURTESY ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

By Jimmy Sheil

Two baseball players with Omaha ties, ex-Omaha Royal outfielder Ernie Young and current Omaha Golden Spikes pitcher Chris George, struck gold with legendary baseball manager Tommy Lasorda in Sydney. In contrast, they appear to be at opposite ends of their professional baseball careers, though both players' stock has risen with the dramatic upset of two-time defending champion Cuba.

The right-handed hitting 6'1" 230 pound Young started in right field for the US, while going 8 for 19 through seven preliminary games helping the US to the medal round. His tournament was highlighted by a 3 for 4 performance versus the Netherlands in a 6-2 US victory. In the gold medal game versus the Cubans, Young had a two-RBI single in a 4-0 victory.

The left-handed George was a late addition to the team, and made three relief appearances in the prelims going 3.2 innings and giving up no runs. In the US's only tourney loss in the first game versus Cuba, George held the Cubans scoreless in the last two innings of a 6-1 defeat.

George had an All-American senior year going 15-0 in Klein, Texas and was drafted in the first round by KC in 1998. He started the 2000 season in Double A Wichita and went 8-5 with a 3.14 ERA in 97 innings before getting called to Omaha.

It was no secret that being allowed to play in the Olympic Games is a great honor, but for a major league team to give you the summer off, it was clear as the belly on Lasorda that you were not in their immediate 2000 season plans. For a younger player, like the 21 year-old Chris George, who is generally considered a top prospect for 2001, it beats being in Triple A without a sure-shot of getting to the big leagues in 2000.

But for a 31-year-old, like ex-Omaha Royal Ernie Young who hasn't been in the majors since 1998, you might feel like the employee who asks, "now you're sure that you don't need me?" Young is with the St. Louis Cardinals, a team that has one of the deepest outfields in the Major Leagues. With a 25 year-old J.D. Drew hitting around .300, along with veterans Eric Davis and Shawon Dunston, it's not likely that Young will be able to gain a spot anytime soon with such a talented outfield. For his major league career, Young has played in 274 games with a .225 batting average and 27 home runs.

Young will be able to hang his gold medal proudly next to some of his big league accomplishments. In 1994, during his first Major League game, he collected a 2-RBI double. He spent the whole 1996 season as the starting Oakland A's center fielder, ranking third among outfielders with only one error in 362 chances. His most memorable defensive play was the start of a triple play with a breath-taking sprawling snag in center. Also, the centerpiece of his professional career was a three-homer game against Minnesota in 1996.

After being acquired by the Kansas City Royals organization in the 1998 off-season, Young stared the season but soon went on the DL in May. Shortly afterward, he was optioned to Omaha. Young made the most in his season with the then-Omaha Royals hitting .327 with 22 dingers in 79 games.

The two Olympians, one a young prospect and one a professional journeyman, may be headed in different directions with their baseball careers, but for one day in Sydney they shared the same glorious plateau. nsa

NSA Conversation with Chris George

What will you remember?
"I'll remember most the guys,"
"The camaraderie off the field and professionalism on the field."

On Tommy Lasorda?
"Lasorda was a trip. He was one of the guys, he loved just hanging out and told a lot of stories I can't tell you."

On pitching versus the Cubans?
"I've never been so nervous on a playing field as I was pitching against the Cubans, they're legendary. And the whole pressure packed experience is going to help me down the road."

On Ernie Young?
Ernie's (Young) a great guy and teammate. He was always showing younger guys different things and since he has a lot of big league experience guys really listened and he had a good Olympics.

Your future?
"I'm not setting my sights on having to make the opening day roster but I will be disappointed when and if I get sent down because the big leagues is where everyone wants to be.

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In the stands

WITH TERRY L. HENION

Basketball the Way it Should be Played

There is little doubt that the game of basketball has gone vertical. In the pros, colleges and high schools, the slam-jamming, high-flying, circus has become a continuous dunk-a-thon.

Purists say that basketball has evolved into nothing more than a trampoline act of "in-your-face, sucka" theatrics. Others say the quality of athletes these days is such that it simply demands the game change along with the abilities of those who play it.

Unless you attend a basketball game played by the fairer sex. So far, despite the smaller ball used by women, their game is still played well below the rim. Oh, a few have managed to throw down a dunk or two of sorts, but generally women's basketball at all levels is played on the floor, not above it.

That explains why, as much as anything, when I click through the interminable number of basketball games now seen on television, I find myself stopping to watch women's games more than ever. Don't get me wrong. I appreciate seeing Vince Carter leap over some 7-foot Lithuanian to toss down a thunder slam as much as the next guy. But to tell the truth, it has become so commonplace that it no longer brings me out of my chair, popcorn spilling on the carpet and Diet Coke dribbling down my shirt.

I will, however, marvel at the way these ladies make slick backdoor cuts and take bounce passes for easy lay-ups. I applaud the way they move their feet on defense instead of sticking a palm into an opponent's midsection to slow down the dribbler. I smile when I hear their cries on defense, calling out picks and such for teammates. Be honest now. When was the last time, at a men's basketball game, that you could actually hear players calling out warnings of picks?

Women play basketball the way that it was played by men back in the 1960s and early 1970s when the infamous "no dunk" rule was still in effect.

Remember the precision of the famed UCLA championship teams? That is the way a good women's team plays the game today.

I find myself settling back to watch, say, a Steph Jones at Nebraska battle for rebounding position instead of hoping her vertical leap with allow her to simply jump over an opponent. I love watching Creighton's Krissie Spanheimer and Angela Timmons hound an opposing dribbler into a turnover or perhaps flick the ball away and dive after it in an attempt to gain possession. And I admire the way that Drake's Carla Bennett, a former Omaha Westside star, banks her soft jumpers off the backboard.

Not too long ago, I was watching a documentary on Bill Russell, the former Boston Celtics great whose defensive prowess altered the way the pro game was played. Russell was a master at blocking shots, intimidating opponents and he was a relentless rebounder. But more important, Russell was perhaps the best student of the game, a true believer in the concept that basketball was, and forever will be, a game of angles and horizontal strategies, not some airborne high-wire act.

Russell said that women today play basketball the way it should be played, especially women at the collegiate and highs school levels. It was his contention that women better understand the basics of the game than men do today and it is reflected in the precision in which they play it.

"The idea in basketball still is to get from point A to point B before your opponent does," Russell said, stroking his goatee in that introspective way of his, "and if the play ends in a dunk, it still happened because of what took place on the floor, not how the play ended above the rim."

Now, since I was never able to do much more than touch the bottom of the net, even on a good jumping day, the thought of dunking in any fashion is foreign to me. And perhaps that is why when I kick back for an evening of basketball watching on the tube, more and more I find myself putting down the clicker when I come to a women's game.

Forget the windmill jams. Give me the slick pick and roll. Spare me the double-clutch 360-degree whirlygig. Give me the backdoor cut and bounce pass.

Away with the tomahawk throwdowns. Let me see watch the ladies execute a

perfect backscreen to set up a three-point shooter.

In a nutshell, it has come to this. For this basketball fan, these days it is no contest.

Ladies first… nsa

Terry Henion is a long-time sportswriter who has worked for the Omaha World-Herald and Hastings Tribune.

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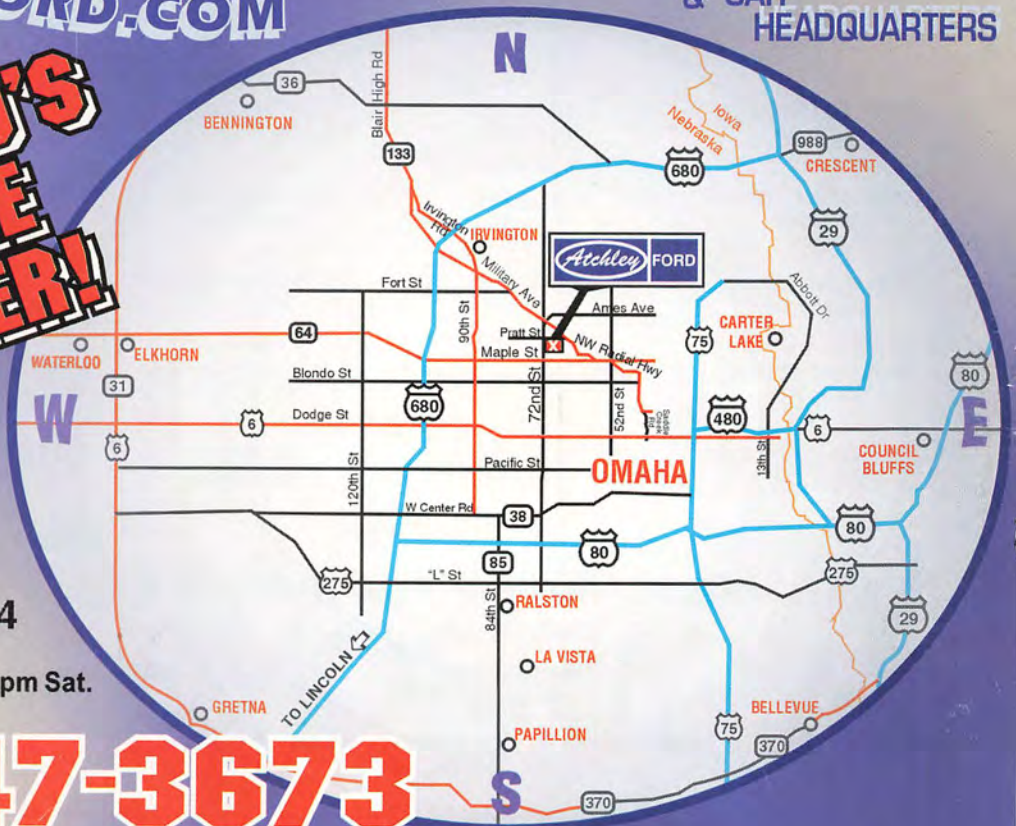

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